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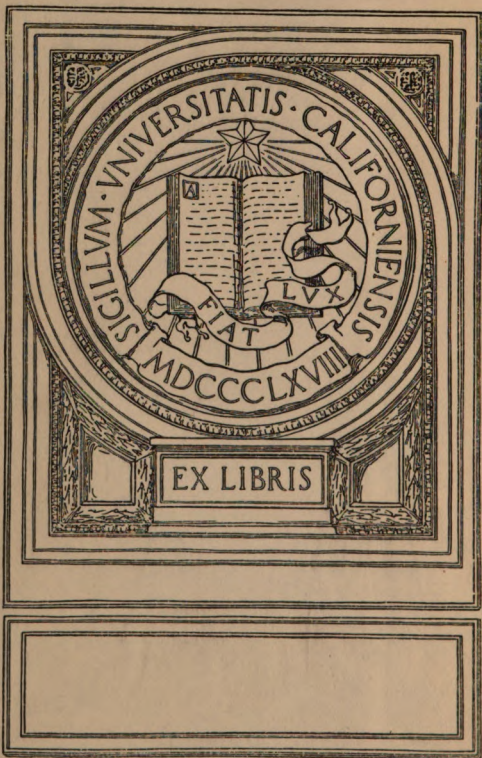
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Leonard W. Bacon

1849.

1871

1872

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THE
PARADISE
OF
COQUETTES:

A POEM,
IN NINE PARTS.

Thomas Brown

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PREFACE.

TO present a long poem to the world, in this age of criticism, is sufficiently perilous in itself, whatever may be its subject or its peculiar manner of composition. How much more perilous is it, if, with the misfortune of being long, it have the additional misfortune of not harmonising with the prevailing taste of the period!

The fashion of our poetic taste, and the fashion of our general manners, exhibit at present a contrast, which the philosophic observer of the varieties of human judgment and caprice cannot fail to remark. If an estimate of our national character were to be formed, in our drawing-rooms, and in those places of promiscuous resort, which are still even a little more public than the most crowded of our private saloons, we should unquestionably be ranked as a people of the *gay*,—or at least, since our efforts to be gay are not always very happy, as a people of determined *lovers* of gaiety. But, if it were on the *prevailing poetry of the time* that the estimate were to be founded, there can be as little doubt, that we should be characterised as a far more serious generation, than the gentle-

men in buckram; and the ladies in hoops and stomachers, who preceded us at the distance of more than a century;—when to listen, with a decorous modesty of every feature, was the great accomplishment of youthful Beauty, as it is now to talk and laugh with grace; and when a smile of easy gaiety on a blooming cheek, in the presence of a stranger of a different sex, was a portent, at which Mothers and Grandmothers gathered their brows and looked grave.

To state fully the circumstances, by which the opposite character of the manners and literature of these different periods seems to have been produced, would require more room than the limits of a preface afford. Some of them are undoubtedly to be traced to peculiar events in our civil history, when opposition to the rigid austerities of puritanism *forced out*, from the courtly party, a more abundant licentiousness of gaiety, than would otherwise have been *evolved*; and when, with little virtue and not much profound statesmanship round the most profligate of our sovereigns, there was always “a ring of witty courtiers round their witty king.”

Other Courts brought more severity of manners. But the powerful direction, which had been given to genius, did not admit of so rapid a change. We can alter, at a moment's warning, the hours of our repasts, the fashions of our drapery, and all the gay or grave ceremonial of our public courtesies, to which our feelings of internal deco-

um speedily adapt themselves:—but, amid a thousand fluctuations of this sort, our libraries remain as they were. We still retain, and of course still re-peruse, the works, which have often delighted us; and our taste, therefore, and the corresponding direction of inventive genius, continue still to preserve a certain relation to them. The gravity of the court of William was a powerful check to the frivolous licentiousness that had flowed from the court of Charles: but it did not prevent the influence of “the wits of Charles,” on the wit that was to render illustrious the succeeding reign.

The very different slowness or quickness, with which we change our admiration of authors, and our admiration of arbitrary forms and outward ceremonies, that react with a more powerful influence than we are ready to suppose on the gaiety or gravity within, may thus account for many seeming irregularities, which the taste and manners of a country present; at periods, when important events, or accidental diversities in the morals and humours of the leaders of courts, have tended to impress a peculiar form on the intercourse of social life. But it is still more to circumstances, that must be the same in every country, in which education is extensively diffused, and the various ranks of educated society mingle with each other, that I would ascribe the contrast at present so remarkable. When the advantage of refined instruction is limited to an aristocracy, elegance of manners will

be confined, or nearly confined, within the same little sphere. To possess the tone of that society is to be in some measure distinguished; to acquire it is an object of proud desire:—and the poet, who is perhaps the most ambitious of all men, will be the quickest to feel that peculiar ambition. He will wish to shew that he is a great master of his art, and to shew also that he is a gentleman; and while the influence of this wish prevails, it is not wonderful, that there should appear some exquisite pieces of light and brilliant fancy, together probably with myriads of such verses, as were *thrown off*, without the trouble of thinking, by “the mob of gentlemen who wrote with ease.”

When, however, in a different state of society, education—in its fullest intellectual sense, of all that is useful and elegant in art and science—is widely diffused, and the light graces of conversation are no longer confined to courts and the frequenters of courts, there is no longer the same object of ambition, in the happy artificial semblance of them; since little would be gained, by appearing to be what such multitudes are. In these circumstances, therefore, the poet, as eager as before to be prominently conspicuous, is very naturally led to assume a different character. The *gay* and *brilliant* are no longer the colours of a higher region, in which it seems glorious to him to glitter:—they are only the common element, in which all around him appear to him to move. He *must* be

distinguished; and he feels that he is then most distinguished from the lively talkers of prose around him, when his poetry is marked by solemnity of subject and stateliness of emphasis. It is a very natural prejudice, to suppose, that a work of art so elaborate must be essentially opposite to what is familiar and seemingly spontaneous; and the more generally brilliant conversation may be, the more solemn therefore, I conceive, in such a case, is poetry likely to become.

Be the cause what it may, however, the fact is certain—that the light and playful fancy, which amused the gravity of our great-great-grandfathers, is now but little visible, in the poetry of their gayer grandchildren. Even our satire, partaking of the selfishness of our serious passions, is only for the leaders or followers of a political party; and, beyond the compass of an epigram or an epilogue, a song or a parody, it seems to us scarcely conceivable, that there should be any relation of verse and smiles.

In this almost exclusive reign of the graver Muses, two styles, of a very different kind, have absorbed and divided the general admiration,—the *ballad* style, and the *serious descriptive*.

Of these the more popular is, without all question, the *ballad* style.—I use the phrase, without meaning in the slightest degree to depreciate, by an humble name, compositions that must be allowed to be of the highest merit,

whatever be the denomination employed to include them, —and merely to express that sort of manner, which was formerly considered as peculiar to short romantic narratives in verse.

That this style has many excellences, cannot be denied, —and excellences, which are perhaps of greater value, in the long complicated story of modern poetic romance, than in the short and simple pieces to which it was formerly confined. By its abruptness, it enables the poet to present his pictures more vividly ; since it frees him from all the forms of slow and ceremonious transition, which often, in the regular Epic, prepare the reader so fully for what is about to be presented to him, that the picture itself is in a great measure anticipated, and however new, seems scarcely to have the charm of novelty. How dull would a tragedy appear, if, at every shifting of the scene, during its first representation, some very kind friend at our elbow were to be unwearied in telling us,—Now the Princess is gone, to prepare the poison, which is afterwards to be slyly mixed in the bowl for her rival,—Now the Prince is to discover, that he has been made the instrument of presenting death to his mistress, and is to swallow what remains in the goblet, or to stab himself with the fatal hand that offered it,—according as either form of suicide may have been more in favour with the horror-loving dramatist. This sort of small prophecy, which is often unavoidable in Epic narration, is a duty

that is not imposed on the ballad poet, who is allowed a far greater exercise of the magic of his art, and whisks us from Britain to the Holy Land, or from any part of this terraqueous globe to any other part of it, with ten times more rapidity than an ancient poet could have ventured on his humbler excursions from Thebes to Athens.

If the poet, in adopting the style of our ancient minstrels, profit by its licensed *abruptness*, he profits no less, in the additional force of seeming reality, which he is enabled to give to his descriptions, by a privilege of an opposite kind; the privilege of almost unbounded *minuteness* of detail. Whole armies may be made to parade before us, with all their caparisons, and weapons of death or defence; and, from the feather or the horse-hair, that dances on the crest, to the ponderous spur on the heel, every piece of every species of accoutrement may be described, with the technical fidelity of a didactic armourer or a controversial antiquary. The advantage, in impression of truth, which a picture derives from this minuteness, is far greater than might be supposed by those who *look back* critically on the description, and, from the measurement of its length as a whole, infer a corresponding weariness, which perhaps was little felt, when object succeeded object rapidly, in the original perusal. In a work constructed on a different model, so cumbrous a detail would indeed be rejected, with instant dislike, as implying too little of that selection, which we require in the

pictures of an artist, who sets out with the assumption of a character of high finish :—and this constant accompanying impression of want of taste in the poet would deprive his minuteness of the effect, which otherwise it might have succeeded in producing. In the ballad, however, no such counteracting impression exists, to check the spontaneous feelings. The minuteness is considered as in perfect congruity with the species of composition. It is what we expected; and, therefore, since it does not bring the author himself before us as a delinquent, it allows us to receive quietly the images, which he presents to us with a distinct particularity, that makes them felt as real and almost familiar.

Together with these advantages, in the liveliness of its abrupt transitions, and the graphic fidelity of its pictures, there can be no doubt that the ballad style derives much of its powerful impression, from its association with the feelings of early years, in the romantic literature and traditionary lore of the nursery. Of that little circle of erudition, tales of wonder formed the principal part; and even the faintest and most shadowy reminiscences of these, may well be supposed to be attended with some portion of the pleasure, with which we view a scene, that recalls to us the distant home of our youth. How much of the peculiar charm of national music, is derived from the early songs, that lulled the infant to slumber, or suspended the sport of the boy, when he

rested his little head on his mother's knee, to gaze, and listen and weep. Ballad poetry is to us, during life, like those first airs, or at least, like airs that partake, and still present to us in a different form, the well-known character of the national melody. It charms us perhaps as excellent in itself :—but it charms us too as the awakener of emotions of other years.

I know, that by many fastidious critics, the ballad style is, *on this very account*, regarded with unjust disparagement. It seems to them childish, and unworthy of the approbation of *men*, because it has many resemblances to that which pleased them when children. They forget, how much of all that man admires, is founded on the same principles, from which the delight of the ballad flows. It would not be easy, in an analysis of the pleasures of taste, to find a principle of more general operation, than that which invests with peculiar charms, whatever is representative of the studies or pastimes that first occupied our thought. It is the duty of a great poet, to avail himself, as fully as his subject admits, of all the sources of pleasure in our intellectual and moral frame; and for availing himself therefore of the associations of early wonder and delight, when there is no sacrifice of higher or wider interest, he is as little reprehensible, as for rendering instrumental to his art, in the most exquisite tragedy, that early love of imitation, which becomes apparent in the first exertions of the infant, and converts

into a little drama or pantomime so many of the sports of the succeeding years of his boyhood.

It is not the philosopher, then, but the mere verbal pedant in criticism, who can suffer himself to be misled by the prejudice that every thing must be childish, by which children are pleased. Yet though the ballad style is not censurable on this account, there are evils that must flow from it, to the poets of genius who may cultivate it, and to the readers whose enthusiastic admiration such powerful genius may excite, which must always render the popularity of that style an object of regret to the philosophic critic, even when he may himself feel, in his own lively emotions of sympathy with some suffering hero or heroine, the commanding influence of the very sway which he deprecates.

It is the duty of the poet, as I have said, to avail himself as much as his subject allows, of all the sources of pleasure in our mental frame, that lie within the compass of his art. But of the many sources, of which he may thus occasionally avail himself, for particular purposes, all are not alike worthy of his mightier and more comprehensive efforts. There are local, and temporary, and accidental associations, as well as associations that may be said to prevail universally: and he alone, it is evident, can expect to be the poet of all ages and countries, who preferring what is universal in our nature to what is partial and transient, addresses himself to the

feelings of all ages and countries. Many peculiarities of the ballad style depend indeed on the very nature of the mind, in some of its liveliest susceptibilities of emotion, and therefore on principles which must be of constant operation, wherever there is a bard to sing, and ears and a heart to receive the song. But how many of its peculiar forms, that, in themselves, have no beauty, and would be regarded as insufferably dull and tame or stiff and quaint, are consecrated, to us only by the remembrance of similar phrases in the early legends of our youth : and where that elevating influence never has been felt, or has ceased to be felt, must appear in their genuine awkwardness or meanness. There can be little doubt, that, in such a case, a foreigner, who knows our language well, but has studied it only in our best works, will often ascribe to the imitator what was meagre poverty of phrase only in the sorry rhymings which he imitated. Nor is it quite certain, that, even in our own country, the early associations, which now confer dignity on the occasional harsh or prosaic phraseology of the ballad, are likely to subsist as long, as that perpetuity of reverence which every poet must wish, for all the forms and phrases of his own works. Whatever little philosophy we may exercise with respect to ourselves, we have of late grown wondrously philosophic, in all matters of the nursery. Within those walls, where they once presided as Divinities, Ghosts and Goblins

have no longer a permitted entrance, and the place of the dark and shadowy tales, which spoke of them, is supplied by innocent moralities of little Masters and Misses, or miniature encyclopædias of half the sciences and arts. It is far from improbable, that, before a few generations shall have passed away, the very names of Ghost and Goblin may be unknown to the baby philosophers of both sexes, who may be trained to lisp and prattle unmeaningly, about experiments and propositions, around the very fire, where their little predecessors had laughed or trembled; at the tale of the merry fay or cruel genie.

Thinslight and uncertain evil, which a poet of genius may possibly suffer, from his adoption of certain forms of ballad expression, that must continue as his, though the feelings which consecrated them should have ceased, is however scarcely worthy of being mentioned. The great and certain evil of the style is the facility of passing current imperfections, which, in any other species of composition, he would be under the necessity of correcting. How many harsh or feeble lines, how many discordant images, are admitted by him, because he remembers the Norfolk Tragedy, or Chevy Chase, or some other ditty as fierce or doleful, and relies on the remembrance of them by his readers! The most useful of all lessons, which a poet, or a writer of any kind, can receive, are those which he derives from his own mind,

during the process of steadily correcting what is imperfect. Every fault, which is thus removed, prevents many faults of future composition : and he who too readily allows a blemish to remain, in the confidence of its being overlooked, is not merely deprived of the benefit of this salutary self-correction, but will learn to become gradually more and more self-indulgent. It is not in the exorcism of vices of style, as in exorcism of a different kind, in which the banishment of a single devil might be the introduction of many worse. But, if one fault, of which an author is conscious, be suffered to retain its place, a whole legion will soon be there ; and the end of that man will be worse than his beginning : his works will be less esteemed, because they will truly be less worthy of esteem.

The peculiar licensed facilities of the ballad style, then, are injurious to the poet himself, in that progress of excellence, which is the noblest destiny of all that is not absolutely perfect. But it is to the delighted and devoted reader chiefly, that the style is hurtful, in the corruption or perversion of his taste. Paradoxical as it may appear, it is hurtful, in a great measure, by that very vividness of interest, which it may seem the perfection of poetry to produce. It must be remembered, however, that vivid interest may be excited by narratives, simply as narratives, independently of all that distinguishes poetry from prose ; since a novel or romance

gives pleasure of the same intense kind, as that which the minstrel excites. The interest, which a poetic narrative thus affords, merely as a story of marvellous incident, will be confounded then, by those who are not in the habit of very nice discriminations, with the pleasure which it excites as a poem; and the mind, affected with the mixed delight, will naturally be led to admire most what has excited this interest in the highest degree. It will assume therefore a false scale, in its measurements of poetic excellence, and, in comparing the most exquisite compositions of a calmer kind, with some hurried and tumultuous tale of peril and mystery, will feel only that the one has awakened more lively emotions, and will err therefore, in awarding a superiority which is not justly due. The more habitually the mind may have been stimulated, by perils and perplexities, and legendary wonders of all sorts, the less lively of course will be the interest which it feels, in simple imagery or sentiment. I am not sure, that he who gives his nights and mornings to the unravelment of the mysteries of our circulating libraries, will be the fittest to feel the beauty of a simple and comprehensive theorem in geometry.— Yet there is not here the same source of error; because the excellence of a novel, and the excellence of a mathematical demonstration, are felt at every moment to be different in kind. But, in poetry, a certain species of interest is unquestionably essential to excellence; and

though this interest is far from being precisely the same with the eagerness of curiosity excited, or the vivid delight of curiosity gratified, they may yet be so intimately blended, that common eyes may be incapable of distinguishing, in the complex gratification, its faint and shadowy elements: It is very manifest, that what affords pleasure must at least have had the merit of being fitted to produce pleasure; and it is not very wonderful therefore, that the work, which forces the reader along, and makes him turn every page with eager avidity, should be classed by him above pieces of merit infinitely superior, but which charm only with the simple beauties of poetry itself.

The injury to the taste of the reader, however, does not arise merely from the higher excitement, which the mere adventures of a romantic narrative afford:—for this they only partake with some of the noblest forms of poetic composition, in the drama and regular Epic. It arises still more from the kind of archetype, which is constantly presented to the mind, and presented to it in association with all the pleasure, which the individual work, by its own surpassing beauty, may have excited. The whole good or evil which a work produces is not that which flows directly from itself. It is one of a class; and, as one of a class, it often injures, by faults from which itself is exempt. To be delighted with a

ballad is to love in some measure ballads; and to have been often thus delighted is to think with a sort of grateful admiration of pieces, which, but for the superior works that have seduced us, we should have regarded with contempt, or at least with indifference. It is no small benefit to the purity of the artist's individual taste, when he has not to confer dignity on a species of work which has been before debased, but when the pre-existing models are such as it is possible for his own high genius to surpass indeed, but which never can be regarded without admiration, even when so surpassed. The works, which the ballad style brings before the mind, are works that abound with all the faults of a barbarous age. They are not, like the Jupiter and Apollo of Greece, a nobler form of all that is noblest in the external majesty or grace and beauty of man; but resemble far more the rudely carved blocks, that, with abundant ferocity of eyes and mouth, but without a single arm or leg, have long received the worship of some savage tribe,—or, at best, some Deva of Hindostan, sitting cross-legged, with a dozen heads, and thrice as many hands. An excellent sculptor, by the exercise of all the embellishing powers of his art, may indeed form, even with a resemblance to such figures, an object that may command the admiration of all who see it. But, marvellous as the display of that art may, be it is not by the assiduous contemplation of such products of it, that

a-Phidias is to be formed, or the eye that is to be worthy of estimating the works of a Phidias.

Short as the period has been, since the revival of this taste, sufficient proof has been afforded of the admiration, that may be reflected on a whole class by individual works of excellence. We have lived to see all the embellishments of the press bestowed on the most miserable rhymings, that chronicle the feats of some petty marauder,—not for the sake of the light, which even such petty chronicles may unquestionably throw on more important contemporary history,—not as elucidating the progress of the finest of arts, and presenting a picture of the amusements of our feudal and semi-barbarous ancestors,—but as *poems*, in themselves worthy of an admiration, which, as yet, we never think of bestowing on meagerness and meanness a little nearer to our own time. The qualities which we admire as ancient, however, we may gradually learn to admire too when modern:—for it is impossible thus to have increased our admiration, of what is rude, without some corresponding assimilation of our taste to the still duller rudeness of discernment, which, at another period, could listen to such strains, as the sublimest poetry.

Popular, however, as the ballad style has of late been rendered, by those eminent talents, which have known how to exhibit it in its most attractive forms, it has still but a divided sway with another species of poetry; which

has not perhaps so great a number of admirers, but has among its admirers a greater number of the sage and refined, whose critical sensibility has been nourished by the study of the finished models of ancient and modern literature.

The style to which I allude, is what may be termed the *serious descriptive*, exhibiting trains of moral reflection, with accordant images, from the scenery of inanimate nature, or the living scene of human pleasure and pain, and vice and virtue. It is perhaps in this powerful and dignified species of poetry, that our country has a higher claim to superiority, than in any other which could be named, and a superiority, which I conceive to be itself founded on qualities, in which it is still nobler for us to excel. Whatever may be the shades of defect, in the political system under which we live, or in the national character that has been formed under it, we are more free than other nations, and, with the long enjoyment of this freedom, have acquired that more elevated tone of moral sentiment, which cannot fail to exist with liberty, where liberty is not the mere lawlessness of a savage, but the inspiring spirit of law itself. We express more powerfully, then, our feelings of this kind, because they are more deep in our hearts; and we paint with brighter colouring the several scenes, because we have before our eyes a brighter and more beautiful society. Our moral descriptions too, have the charm of

being more *various* as well as *vivid*; for we see man in a greater diversity of aspects,—not the powerful only who command, and the feeble who obey, that, in so many states, with a little difference of external drapery, constitute all the varieties of social life,—but those innumerable beautiful gradations of independence, in which there is a difference of rank indeed, and of the external form of happiness, but not of the amount of happiness itself, nor of the fearless security, in which that happiness reposes.

It is an additional excellence of this species of poetry, that it tends, by the most delightful of all reciprocations, to nourish the pure and generous moral feelings, in which it has in part originated. So various are the external circumstances, that determine, I will not say the whole character, but many of those particular actions, by the repetition of which the general character may be insensibly modified, that it would be absurd to endeavour to estimate, in any case, the amount of influences which must vary with almost every accident in the life of every individual. Yet, if such an analysis could be made, there can be no doubt, that one very important element would be found to be the poetry of the country. Every one is acquainted with the saying of the old Scotch patriot, Fletcher of Salton, who cared little what the laws of a people were, if only he had the making of their ballads: and though we may not per-

haps be willing to admit the paradox, to the whole extent of its literal import, it may be readily admitted, to the limited extent, in which he probably meant it to be understood. The notions of vice and virtue, that are truly effective, are not those which we call up, in our grave enquiries into the principles of morals and the practical duties of man, but those which float along the mind spontaneously, in the very hour or moment of action. There is a morality of our current trains of thought, not arranged indeed as a system of principles in regular order, but a mixed result of lessons and examples, and reflections, and accidental associations of pleasure and pain,—of the most interesting events, that have impressed us with admiration, or pity, or indignant resentment,—the sublime and pathetic expressions of those who have heroically dared or suffered,—the pointed maxims of sages and wits,—and still more than any of these, because most easy to be remembered, that happy eloquence of verse, which, in conveying to us moral truths, has impressed them on our hearts, in a manner that made it impossible for us to forget them. These, united, form as it were one active moral impulse, the persuasive force of which, except in cases of very strong passion or very powerful temptation, is constantly operating, in some greater or less degree, on the conduct of all who have not been absolutely uninstructed. Even under the most depressing government, and under superstition still more

wretchedly debasing, it co-operates with the great native principle within us, in preserving feelings, that might otherwise have been clouded or overwhelmed. The bard has not lost, in the civilised world, the function, which he is represented as exercising more directly, in a simpler and wilder state of society. He is a legislator still, fashioning our conduct, even when we are not conscious that we are obeying him :—and, when other circumstances are equal, it is impossible to doubt, that the nation must be the most virtuous, in which poets after poets, in bright succession, have been the most lavish of all the rich treasures of their art, in the embellishment of sentiments of virtue.

In these powerful verses our nation, as I have already remarked, is peculiarly rich : and though it would be as little possible for any one to say, how much he has morally profited, by every impulse which his mind may have thus received, as it would be for him to calculate, how much he has profited in mere bodily grace of movement, by the elegance of the mein and gestures of his familiar associates, there can be no question that a certain moral grace of this kind is acquired, which directs the mental conduct often as insensibly, as the step, or stretching of the arm, or gentle inclination of the head, is governed by those very airs, that seem to rise from every motion of the graceful, rather than to have preceded and produced them.

The great evil of our serious poetry, however, in this respect, is that, by the very circumstance of its stately ravity, it has necessarily a didactic air, which lessens the force of its persuasion. It is an original sin of our nature, to be not very willing to admit reproof. Even general satire, if satire be grave, finds the reader usually as impenetrably on his guard, as if he were himself guilty of some one or other of the crimes, against which the invective is directed; and a single stroke, that seems to be only the flourish of a playful hand, without any of the malice prepossessed of a censor, will touch more to the quick, and cut away more peccant matter, than repeated assaults of a lustier arm, in serious and pertinacious combat with every human vice and folly. When Horace is characterised to us in a very happy picture,* as one whom we admit, in the very gaiety of friendship, to play around the heart, we need not be astonished at the success, with which, in these favourable circumstances, he is said to find his way slily to all the vices that are lurking in its secret corners.

The very excellence attained in this sublime province has perhaps, however, in one respect, been injurious to the grace and liveliness of our general poetry. Though this delightful art is certainly something far more than mere personification, and though the dullest verses may

* Omne vafer vitium ridenti Flaccus amico
Tangit, et admissus circum præcordia, ludit.

be full of all the tropes of rhetoric; there can be no doubt of the powerful charm of those allegorical beings with which poetic fancy has peopled the universe. Nothing can indeed be more disgusting to every mind of the slightest taste, than the trite comparisons to the Goddess of Beauty, with which every amorous songster thinks that he embellishes his miserable madrigal or acrostic—yet how much delight do we owe to Venus and the Graces, when introduced to us by bards, whom these Divinities themselves seem to have gladly admitted into their train! The inexhaustible creations of this sort, which are for ever lying open to the imagination, our serious descriptive poetry does not exclude indeed, for it derives from them occasionally its sublimest ornaments: but the general spirit of the poetry is not friendly to them. It accustoms us rather to look on man as man, on nature as nature, with more vividness, but almost with the exact truth of prose. It presents us with sublime sentiments of all that is generous and heroic;—it endears man to our regard as amiable, to our pity as suffering, to our very wrath and indignation, if he be a sufferer under oppression. It moves us with all the vehemence of oratory; but it scarcely employs a more figured phrase, than the orator considers himself permitted to use. It seems to have an office too important to allow it to stop to trifle with the airy and shadowy beings that may come across it in its way:—and the reader, assimilated gradually in sentiment to the prevail-

ing feelings of the bard who has frequently delighted him, learns at last, or almost learns, to consider poetry as only the perfection of animated prose.

In these circumstances, with warm admiration of the genius of the great masters in the other departments of verse, but with a wish to direct some little attention to a province that seems to me to have been unworthily neglected, I venture to submit to the public the following poem. It is an attempt to represent the manners which are living around us,—to trace to the heart many of those little passions, which are suffered to appeal to the eye only in the smile or the frown,—to satirise what is worthy of satire, but to satirise playfully, rather by painting than invective,—and, at the same time to enliven the picture of the mere human scene with some of those embodied shapes of the fairy world of fancy, which, powerful as they are in embellishment, it is too much the fashion of modern poetry to disregard.

It is an *attempt* however only—and an attempt, of which, in the present direction of poetic taste and studies, even though I were more disposed to regard the piece itself with all the ordinary vanity of authorship, I should be far from anticipating with much confidence the success. The poet of chivalrous adventure requires, for the interest which he wishes to excite, only those sympathetic passions, which nature has provided for him in every breast; and all, or almost all, who have received the general instruc-

tion that is necessary for being readers of poetry, can feel the charm of sentiments of elevated virtue, and of pictures of the well marked passions and pleasures and sufferings of life. But the light and playful species of Epic is addressed to a small circle. It requires, in those whom it addresses, a knowledge not merely of the tone of that society from which its heroes and heroines are drawn, but, in combination with this, a quick perception of the lighter shades of character and passion, which are invisible to common eyes, accustomed only to the broad and the glaring; and an acquaintance with those beauties of graver poetry, which are often meant to be suggested to the reader's mind, not with the coarseness of parody indeed, but in shadowy allusions, which without the coarseness, have all the light contrast of parody itself. It is not among the young, who are the quickest to admire and the warmest to praise, that such poetry must look for favour, but, where favour is far more rarely to be found, among the mature in experience and discernment, whose susceptibility of lively admiration has been cooled by the very culture which fitted them to judge,—who are slow therefore to be delighted, and who express their delight in terms of calm and qualified approval, that are the best voice of fame indeed; but are fame only to those who know to estimate the minds which have conferred it.

So fully am I aware of the probable influence of former habits of poetic reading of a different kind, on the far

greater proportion of my readers, that I have little doubt that ninety-nine of the hundred—if I may venture to calculate on so large a number—will consider as censurable in the poem, what I yet trust that one in the hundred will regard with approbation, and what, for the sake of that one mind, with the prospect of such a disproportion in the number of censurers, I have not hesitated to retain. I allude to the colloquy of my heroine with the Celestial Genius, which many of my readers, accustomed to regard every thing as superfluous, that does not shift a scene or hurry on an event, may view only as a needless retardation of the glorious vision that was to be indulged to her; but without which, as I conceive, it would have been impossible for me to delineate faithfully, that *character of exquisite coquetry*, which alone could justify and account for the privileged revelation.

It has been my wish, accordingly, in the whole conduct of my heroine, to preserve, as faithfully as my art would allow, the character of this perfect coquetry, of that coquetry, the spirit of which never sleeps, while the eye and the mind are awake, but in all circumstances, and all places, and all times, is still conscious of the power of charming, and still eager to exercise the delightful power. If, in the presence of the Genius, she had calmly listened to his story of all which he had done for her, and gracefully spoken or looked her thanks, there can be no doubt, that the earthly visitant might

have been sooner admitted within the Paradise of her kindred Immortals :—but, in that case, my heroine would not have been of sufficient dignity of pre-eminence in the rank of his worshippers, to merit the peculiar favour of the mighty being, who was to condescend to be her guide. To the perfection of her character, and therefore indirectly to the perfection of his, it was necessary, that in the representation of the celestial tête-a-tête, she should carry on, almost without intentionally willing it, a sort of gentle flirtation with the Genius himself,—not indeed precisely in the same manner, as she would have coquetted with a mortal, whom she might hope to rank in her train of slaves,—but at least with that wish of winning admiration, which, to be active, requires only the presence of a being who can admire.

It is not, however, the mere picture of character, essential as it truly is to the main action of the piece, which is in this case to be estimated. The delay, which the little dialogue produces, must be considered also in the light relation which it is intended to bear to the tardy pomp and solemnity of the serious Epic,—where the poet, far from rushing on rapidly with his hero to the consummation of the end proposed by him, contrives often to *suspend* the action, by the introduction of some single combat or embassy, or consultation of Gods or Men. The high debate, and the contest of arms, admit

here of being lightly shadowed together; for what war is to the frowning chief, flirtation is to smiling woman. It has enterprises as resolute, and at least as many stratagems. Her conversation, her very silence, her mere presence, is as it were a skirmish of airs and graces; and the place, wherever it may be, where she is ambitious of shining, is as truly as the most memorable plain where Cæsar or Æneas or Hector fought, a field of conquest or defeat.

The objection, which I have supposed to be made, by a large proportion of my hundred readers, to this little scene of episodic warfare, may perhaps be made to other passages of my poem, which it is not so easy for me to divine. All, however, which I venture to request, in such a case, is, that, before condemnation, they will have the goodness to reflect on the sort of poetry, to which the specimen submitted to them belongs.

Above all, I trust, that, before objecting to the general conduct of the poem, or its general style, they will not forget how much it is the very essence of such poetry, to give a gay importance to very little matters, and how necessary it is, that the style, in this respect, should harmonise with the light and sportive solemnities of which it treats.

On this accordance of style, however, the force of which, as an essential charm of versification, seems to me not sufficiently understood, I may perhaps, even at

the close of a preface already too long, be permitted to offer a very few remarks.

All, I presume, have felt, at times, in the perusal of our best poets, the delight afforded by what is termed *imitative harmony*, when the sound, as it has been aptly said, is "an echo to the sense." The harmony of which I speak, however, is something far more comprehensive than this mere occasional imitation. Such remarkable accordances are of course sparingly used, and reserved for the most striking circumstances in the narrative or description: since, if frequent, they would not merely interrupt too much the natural flow of the rhythm, but would betray a laborious search of concords, that would bring the very labour painfully before the reader's mind. What is commonly termed *imitative harmony* is then, as I have said, of rare occurrence. But there is a fainter and more shadowy harmony with the general subject, which, as I conceive, should be throughout the poem the directing spirit of the verse,—a harmony which does not make itself remarkable in particular lines, but is felt as a whole, in the continued strain, or rather is scarcely appreciated as a separate element, even by those whom it delights, but is distinguishable only by the few, who not content with being simply pleased, are in the habit of analysing their very pleasures. In some tale of military conflict, for example, the accordance of the strain is not to be in a single line or two only, that may imitate

the rushing of cavalry, or the clashing of swords, or the thunder of the mightier engines of modern war; but the whole style should partake of the character of the impetuous feelings described, and of the feelings that rise by sympathy in the mind of the reader. It should comprehend much action in little space;—the metrical rhythm should be frequently broken;—and the words themselves, which constitute the rhythm, be less chosen for softness than for force. The *whole* may thus have a *harmony* that is truly *imitative*, though there may not be a single line, or portion of a line, to which a common critic would think of applying the term. But the species of separate sounds themselves, and the order of their collocation, which might be the best suited for a description so tumultuous, are surely not the best that could be selected for describing the elegant frivolities of the toilet, and all that gentle warfare for which the toilet prepares. The lines may have the same number of syllables; but he must indeed have little poetic discrimination, who does not feel, that, with the same number of syllabic sounds, there should still be in these sounds a rhythmical variety of some sort, to mark and harmonise with the diversity of theme. What is thus indisputably true of the flow of sound is not less true of the flow of sentiment and fancy, which should glide softly, or rush along, with a corresponding diversity of movement. A series of the harshest syllables, descriptive of the repose

and tender conversation of two lovers, would scarcely violate more the harmony of which I speak, than a quick desertion of image for image, and thought for thought. The chief harmony, in short, is not with sounds, or other external qualities, but with the internal emotions; and, as these are gay, or soft, or impetuous, the whole character of the strain, is to be impetuous, or soft, or gay. The hurry of images in a great poet's description of a battle, is only reflective of the hurrying feelings, in the minds of the warring multitude:—but he has surely feelings of a very different kind to reflect, if the warfare which he sings be that of looks and tones. His strain, however, is in the one case, as much as in the other, to be accordant with the emotions which it paints. Instead of the brief and rapid transitions from great objects to greater, from the conflicts of heroes to the shock of Gods themselves, where all is the violence of the sword or the thunderbolt,—there should be a varying but ever faithful semblance of the sprightliness, with which Beauty enlivens even wit itself, of the gentle languor, with which Beauty smiles, or of the minute care, with which she brings forward grace after grace, to play and conquer, in the little field, to which the power of those graces is limited. A gay or soft diffusiveness, therefore, far from being a blemish in such a style, is occasionally its happiest grace. It is, in short, the wish of the poet, to excite, as much as his art allows him, such feelings

as are awakened by the presence of Beauty herself; and his verse, and the images which his verse presents, that are the only means of his art, must conspire in the delightful effect, with according influence.

It was not, however, the nature of my subject only, which I had to consider, on determining the style that would suit it, but the sort of audience also which I imagined before me. It must be remembered, that, in my poem, I describe myself as addressing the Fair, and the Fair alone. What then is the style which such an audience supposes? It is the style of one, who delights at once in the subject which he treats, and in the presence of those who are listening to him,—who dwells therefore gladly on his theme,—and who, if he sometimes trifle with his lyre, is slow to quit its strings, only because there are those around, from whom, when he has ceased, he must be condemned to part:

Such are the circumstances, which I have endeavoured, in the management of my poem, to keep constantly in view. I cannot expect my readers to have them as constantly in mind:—but they will perhaps forgive me, if I again venture to entreat, that, when they pause to criticise either the conduct of the action, or the general diction and flow of the thought or of the verse, they will reflect, that the character in which the Poet professes to speak is that of the Poet of Woman,—that he is supposed to be addressing Woman and Woman only,—and

addressing her on adventures of which she is the heroine, and on charms and graces, which it is the whole history of her beauty to have exercised with failure or success.

THE PARADISE OF COQUETTES.

PART I.

INTRODUCTION.—THE POET.

ANALYSIS.

Subject proposed. Ambition to be considered as the Poet of Woman. Prophetic hopes of its fulfilment. Omens in early life of future devotion 'o the love and praise of the Fair. Pleasure felt in infancy at the smile of Female Beauty. First lisplings of verse in its praise. Love of those Fairy Tales, to which the adventures of a heroine gave interest. Discovery of the Metamorphoses of Ovid. Effects of the perusal of that Poem. Milton's Eve. The Planet Venus. Remembrances after Death.

TO THE LIBRARY

THE
PARADISE OF COQUETTES.

PART I.

THE POET.

WHAT new delights the mortal Belle await,
When eyes all-conquering yield at last to fate;
In what gay bowers she leads her train above,
Charms, and forgets all sublunary love,
I sing.—Ye Fair, whose hearts, tho' swift to glow,
As yet have warm'd but at an earthly Beau,
With sweet attentive smiles around me throng,
And love the Poet, while ye list the song!

POET OF WOMAN,—for that proudest name,
I leave the contest of all meaner fame.
Let Man, the niggard of a chill renown,
For fools who court it, save his laurel crown;
Unworthy he of rapture, who would pay

One leaf of myrtle for whole wreaths of bay.
Ne'er shall he know to win a tender sigh,
Who trembles at each *wrinkling* critic's eye:
The strain which bids the varying Passion start,
Must seek its triumph only from the heart.
One look, ye Fair! his happy fate secures,
Who asks no smile, and dreads no frown,—but yours.

Votive to *you*, my lyre of myrtle flings
No sound of horror from its silken strings;
Bids no stern Major sterner Majors meet,
Nor softest Ensign gasp, but at your feet.
Tho' gentle ears the wild tumultuous breath
Of sighs, and savage metaphors of death,
Low murmuring moans, that buz along the dance,
When Lord or Lordling falls at every glance,
Can list insatiate,—even the murderous eye
Would shrink from battles, where 'tis death to die;
Where Beaux, with more than love's short blindness dark,
Lose, with their eyes, the power all eyes to mark;
And heroes, graceful in the mazy strife,
Lopt of their limbs and glory, limp for life:
While Bards, twice butchering, every wound rehearse,
And softly teach anatomy in verse.—
Of harmless wars be mine to sing the field,
Where even the vanquish'd conquer while they yield,

Wounds, which on purest cambric leave no stain,
And eyes which, tho' they frown, can smile again!

Such be my song ! to timid Woman dear,
Such ever be the song which claims her ear !—
So, with unstudied rapture o'er my page
Shall bend the brightest eyes of every age,
There dwell, unmindful of the evening's show,
Forgot the plume, the tissue, and the beau.
While gloves the prayer-book but on Sundays cross,
And stiff-bound bibles never lose their gloss,
Quick-opening leaves my ready tome shall speak
The dearer daily ritual of the week.
Amid those leaves,—as oft to be survey'd—
Some lover's treasur'd rhymings shall be laid,
The first sweet-billet which reveal'd his sigh,
And all which Love makes sense to Beauty's eye.

When novels weary,—or, all duly done,
The ruthless sire appears'd, the daughter won,
When marriage, closing each delightful strife,
Leaves the dull husband yawning with his wife,
Still with new rapture shall my page succeed,—
And languid eyes turn brighter while they read.

Oft in the crowded rout, when, spite of guile,
The spreading numbness creeps o'er every smile,
When eyes, that fain would sparkle, 'mid the ring-
Have said a thousand times the same dull thing,
Some happier Belle shall quote my tender line,—
And Beaux, who never read—shall know it mine.

Think not, ye sweet awarders of my doom !
When proud I claim one title for my tomb,
More dear than kings and heralds give and guard,
To live, and die, your worshippers and band,—
Think not, with boastful suit, that claim I dare,
Without one omen to approve my prayer !
Tho' round my brow no hallowing myrtle spread,
Nor turtles perch'd upon my infant head ;
To my young heart the early passion given
Was surer presage of inspiring heaven.

Even in those infant hours, when life appears
Nought but one laugh and sob of smiles and tears,
When long my cradle's noisy murmur ran,
And vain the soothings, vain the threats of man,
With what calm joy I sunk at once to rest,
Lull'd by soft woman's smile, on woman's breast.

And ye, that, sacred to that gentle gaze,
Catch all your sweetness from the charms ye praise,
Hymns of the melting heart, to which I owe
Whate'er, in absence, can a bliss bestow !
No common fire, that warms the infant dream,
Bade my first accents murmur to your theme.
Ere art the tender charm of verse could teach,
When my short voice but lisp'd its feeble speech,
I rhym'd,—and sure 'twas passion from above
That breath'd the numbers,—for I rhym'd of love.
Oft, in my little lap when gifts were flung,
Has Beauty laugh'd and listen'd while I sung;
For, of the sweetmeat or the toy remiss,
I only hail'd the *giver* and the *kiss*.

Tales of my nursery ! shall that still-lov'd spot
That window corner ever be forgot,
Where, thro' the woodbine when with upward ray
Gleam'd the last shadows of departing day,
Still did I sit, and, with unwearied eye,
Read while I wept, and scarcely paus'd to sigh !
In that gay drawer, with fairy fictions stor'd,
When some new tale was added to my hoard,
While o'er each page my eager glance was flung,
'Twas but to learn, what *female* fate was sung :

If no sad maid the castle shut from light,
I heeded not the giant and the knight.

Sweet Cinderella, even before the ball,
How did I love thee,—ashes, rags, and all!
What bliss I deem'd it to have stood beside,
On every virgin when thy shoe was tried;
How long'd to see thy shape the slipper suit;
But, dearer than the slipper, lov'd the foot!

Thanks, gentle Ovid! thanks be to thy care,
That,—best of wealth,—has multiplied the fair,
Call'd even from heaven, a race of brighter power,
And given a goddess to each mortal bower.
Olympus half descends;—and every glade
Sees forms celestial languish in its shade.
Like gentle Woman, blest with hearts that melt,
Here airy nymphs have sigh'd while shepherds knelt,
Or, bolder oft, to kneel when shepherds fail'd,
Have woo'd, like gentle Woman, and prevail'd.
The king of heaven, who shakes it with his nod,
In sweet mortality has mask'd the god;
And, rival of the flame that warms my lyre,
Left all his incense, for a dearer fire.
Blest be the tales, whose bright examples teach,
With holy power, the faithful truths I preach;—

For sure, to vie with Gods if virtue's test,
Who vows at Beauty's feet has worshipp'd best.

Boldest of tell-tales, that to mortal eye
Giv'st the soft scandal of the laughing sky !
How dear that far-past day, when first, by chance,
Thy pictur'd miracles detain'd my glance !
'Twas in that room, scarce known to sun and air,
Still call'd *the Study*, tho' no student there ;
Where, but one day in seven with books perplex'd,
The chaplain sought his sermon *with* his text,
And still the shortest, which his hand might trace,
His weary hand, ere dinner call'd to grace ;—
There, hid in dust, beneath the cobweb'd store
Of reverend tomes, as heavy as their lore,
I found, and, while he slumber'd off the toil
Of two long periods, bore away my spoil.
With what insatiate hope my gaze I fed,
And, wondering still, yet trusted all I read !
And while undoubting from the verse I drew
Joys, loves, and fears, and wishes, all how new,
Where'er I glanc'd Olympus seem'd to rise ;
Nurse Rachel's self a *goddess* in disguise.
—Yet ah ! tho' now a *Woman's* form she wore,
My rose-cheek'd cousin might be gaine no more.
What terror, when, each tale of wonder done,

The fate of thousand nymphs I fear'd for *one*!
Some god might sue—and though, in careless pride,
With every god a rival by my side,
Her love I safe had trusted, sure to see
Immortal suppliants scorn'd, and scorn'd for *me*,
Yet might their vengeance strike each frailer part
And change her *charms*,—that could not change her *heart*.

That very eve, when she, whom oft to greet
A welcome guest I ran with ready feet,
Too long a stranger, to a home of joy
Return'd, and sought with early glance her boy;
Clasp'd on her knee once more, and smil'd to own
Her little fondling on his favourite throne;
Even on that happy seat, while gay I press'd
The bending lip, caressing and caress'd,
How did I tremble lest some jealous power,
To a chill leaf should turn that living flower!
How oft I almost fancied from her charms
A sudden foliage rustling in my arms,
And starting, while a doubtful glance I rais'd,
Felt even her kiss turn colder, as I gaz'd!

Dire was the terror:—yet, how wildly dear,
What wishes more than paid that single fear;
Hopes, at whose boyish faith my sager skill

Laughs *without scorn*, and almost owns them still,—
False as light visions that in slumber wave,
Yet O! how real in the joy they gave.

Then deathlike solitude, so drear before,
With not one smiler nigh, was dull no more.
O lawns, O green recesses, O ye streams,
That still have known me, from my infant dreams,
Where Love, my childhood's playmate, 'mid your dells
Laugh'd, and with idle wings delighted dwells!
Tho' now the witness of a fonder flame,
And hallow'd long by *Woman's* sacred name,
Ye then were conscious, when my upfix'd eyes
Oft sought, and hop'd, a mistress from the skies.
Where'er I vagrant loiter'd, or, embower'd,
Fled the full blaze which sultry Summer shower'd,
The strange ambition to my fancy spoke,
And sooth'd my dream, still present when I woke.

Where, widening sudden into day, the glade
Drinks the full sun, while all around is shade,
And, humming 'mid the furze, the bees that roam
Seem shut for ever from the vale and home;
On that warm turfy circle careless spread,
While the long fern wav'd coolness o'er my head,
And still preserv'd, tho' Spring's sweet blooms had died,

One cowslip fresh, that blossom'd at its side,—
How oft, when, rustling in the breeze, a sound
Stirr'd the deep woods, that almost clos'd around,
With quick expectance, starting from my trance,
I watch'd the moving shade, with busy glance !
Perhaps, for me, some goddess might assume
A mortal guise, and issue from the gloom,—
No full-grown Deity, of proud controul,
That with the Thunderer shares the nectar bowl ;
But, meeter softness for my vows and arms,
Some infant Grace, just budding into charms,
That sports with Cupid, in the bowers above,
And bandages his eyes, and feeds his dove.
Ah ! soon were hush'd the woods—no footstep near :
Yet watch'd my gaze, and clos'd but with a tear.

The murmuring wave, that 'mid the hazles flow'd,
I deem'd some sighing Naiad's soft abode ;
And tho' before, to gain the distant hill,
With scornful speed I wont to leap the rill ;
There duteous oft, at noon and vesper beam,
I lov'd to bathe and linger in the stream.

Wild transports !—Yet, tho' fled the trusting hour,
Not vain the madness of so sweet a power,

That but prepar'd a worship, more divine,
O better Goddess, Woman ! when 'twas thine.

And still I bless the influence, still I feel
A sweet enchantment linger from the zeal.
Tho' chang'd that mute devotion,—dearer now
Lips, that can smile warm answers to my vow.
While Love the grateful lesson has imprest,
To give my life to those who charm it best ;—
Yet when, in strains that half-unbidden rise,
I sing the power divine of mortal eyes ;
As still a softer inspiration spread,
Where first thy wonders, gentle Bard ! were read,
Those walks are dearest, which thy visions knew,
And the mad wishes, even in madness true,
When, with a heart that glow'd to wake and live,
I sought from Heaven, what Earth was rich to give.
These elms that shade me still, long mark'd above
With many a name, and many a rhyme of love,
Beheld me studious stretch'd when half the day
I stole, and secret fed upon thy lay.—
Not that I paus'd on *all*, thy tales unfold.—
Even nymphs I scorn'd, if nymphs were proud and cold.
I lov'd not Juno's royal airs divine ;
Nay, tho' a poet, scarce could name the Nine.

I car'd not, tho' a Muse had never been ;—
But well I knew the Graces, and their Queen.

And thou, O glory of the British art !
Who blind to beauty, felt'st it at thy heart ;—
Inspir'd of Love, who knew'st so well to trace
The soft majestic mother of our race !
Tho' my warm soul assented to thy fame,
Oft have I marvell'd at thy poem's name.
What tho' our sire was driven from Eden's bowers,
Lost a few idle fruits, and idler flowers,
Still, in his Eve, tho' of ten Edens reft,
Was sweeter Paradise, than all he left.
'Twas but a Garden—and so cheap the cost,
A garden, for a smile, were nobly lost.

On one fair planet, when along the sky
With early wonder rov'd my boyish eye,
Still did it fix ;—and sure, if signs portend,
That love, O Woman ! mark'd me for thy friend.
Let *Mars* on Epic rhymers gleam afar !
Who follows *Venus*, hails a brighter star.

And that sweet star, which life's best radiance gave,
The star of Beauty, still shall light my grave.
O ! when this heart, which throbs but to adore,

Shall breathe one constant prayer, and thrill no more,
When looks, which once could double life, shall speak,
Nor one pale rapture flush along my cheek,—
O ! will ye then my frequent thought renew,
True to his memory, who in death was true ?
So, tho' no marble Seraph seem to rise,
Cold from my tomb to guide me to the skies,
Warm living angels there shall bend, and shed
The tears I love, upon my conscious bed.
There, if the simplest wild flower of the spring
Thro' the low grass its dewy radiance fling,
Soft hands shall stoop, the hallow'd gem to bear,
Yet almost shrink, and start, to pluck it there:
And when some other lyre—when mine is mute—
Shall to these strains its votive numbers suit,
Catch all the worship, and, with sweeter song,
But not with fonder heart, the theme prolong;
When the proud bard the glowing verse shall swell,
And Beauty hang attentive o'er his shell,
Even while she smiles delighted, and repays
The tuneful homage with her warmest gaze,
A sudden sadness to her eye shall start,
And strains, long lov'd, shall float around her heart.
The master's hand shall pause:—his glance shall see
The half-hid tear;—and know 'twas given for me.

THE PARADISE OF COQUETTES.

PART II.

THE ABJURATION OF COQUETRY.

ANALYSIS.

Address to Morning. Defence of the late hours of Fashionable Beauty. Opposite offices which Morning performs to the high and low ranks of life. The dawn of day in London. Return of Zephyra from an evening party. Her reflections on the disappointments and slights which she had suffered. A Masquerade. A Private Concert. A Ball. A lover attracted. Unsuspected appearance of a former favoured Lover. Entrance of a rival Beauty. Her success in carrying off Zephyra's admirer. Picture of a diminutive fopling. Supper. Dance renewed after Supper. Advantage of going very late to Parties. A farewell to all the arts and pleasures of Coquetry. Inadequacy of those pleasures to compensate the anxieties and disappointments which attend them. Happier life of her whose love is confined to one. Resolution to imitate that life. *The solemn vow of abjuration.*

THE

ABJURATION OF COQUETRY.

SWEET hour of morn, whose half-creative ray
Calls the fresh world exulting into day,
When every bird is song, and every bloom,
That breathes along the valley is perfume!
Let rustic maids, still faithful to thy power,
Gay as the bird, and rosy as the flower,
Attend the matin hymn!—Thy beam shall rise
Unhail'd, unworshipp'd, by politer eyes.
Her pallet, tho' the village girl forsakes,
Whose simple day is that which Nature makes,
Hastes to her field, while larks are first in air,
And finds her cows, and earlier lover, there;
Shall Beauty, whom light hours of angels suit,
Watch, eat, and slumber, with the clown and brute?

No ! from the ceiling let the lustre fall,
And silver radiance stream along the wall !
Pure as the light of heaven's ethereal day,
Which sees no wretch, and shines but on the gay ;
'Mid pearls, and gems, and plumes o'er plumes that
swell,

And fans that flutter to the laughing Belle,
Let starry lamps a softened splendour throw
On all the fair magnificence below ;
Teach every eye more languid love to speak,
The mellow'd rouge to live along the cheek,
Warm the cold stucco'd brow, and half assuage
With second charms the tyranny of age !

When glares the fiercer sun, his sight to guard,
Love folds his pinions ;—and all hearts are hard :
But, in the lustre's gentle blaze, he flies
With busy wing, nor shuts his timid eyes ;—
And the coy fair, who met each glance with dread,
Melts like the wax that glows above her head.
Such hours not frowning Sages can condemn :
They vigils keep, and Beauty copies them.

And thou, O bearer of the morning ray !
Thou too, the charm of Beauty shalt obey.
Duteous as Night, that comes not till she call,

Late at the Rout, and later at the Ball;
Thou, all her sweet caprices to fulfil,
Shalt suit thy varying office to her will.
Tho' to the world of toll, their slumber done,
Thou haste, the bright companion of the sun;
Haste, the still lazy eyelid to restrain,
With Noise and busy Hurry in thy train;
At Beauty's couch, thou tak'st thy peaceful stand,
The sleepy poppy nodding in thy hand,
Draw'st the close silk, which gloom yet deeper throws,
And seem'st the Queen of darkness and repose.

'Tis dawn.—Yet London's ever-clouded sky
Still wraps her alleys from the Morning's eye,
Still, with kind smoke, detains the sluggish Night,
And guards awhile the wretch that shuns the light.
Now all, whom guilt or pleasure bade to roam
With hours inverted, seek alike their home.
To calls whose gentle echoes nought confess,
Save oaths and mirth, the curse and the caress,
With tawdry charms unwoo'd, and weary feet,
Retire the last pale lingerers of the street,—
And in the coach, with flaunting torches gay,
Meet homeward Belles, more weary still than they.

The thundering peal has ceased.—The chariot bends
Its triple footstep : and the fair descends.—
Now sullen John his faithful comrades guides
To the low roof, which all his fondness hides,
Where equal love awakes no jealous strife—
Home of his child, his horses, dog, and wife.
Glad haste the steeds, and know their journey o'er.
Ah steeds, unconscious of the charms ye bore !

Why, on her ottoman forgetful laid,
Why calls not Zephyra her Susan's aid ?—
Susan, who, skill'd to raise and to destroy,
The quick artificer of charms and joy,
Like sages, who, if Nature burst her law,
Could hear worlds crash, nor stop the unfinish'd saw,
At eve 'mid silken ruins calmly stands,
The careful fabrics of her morning hands.
Her's is the mighty anodyne, the skill
To mix sweet truths with falsehoods sweeter still,—
Tho' bright the gem, that brighter grace to find,
Which makes the brilliant fatal to mankind,
And, while the lovely victor she unarms,
Still nurse with present praise to-morrow's charms.
Blest hour, when Beauty, ere she sleep can say,
Now come to-morrow :—I have charm'd to day.

Why does the bell its wonted call forbear ?
Why speeds not Susan from her cards or prayer ?
Ah ! think too gentle Susan ! nor the while
Trust thy strong virtue to that stronger smile !
Frank, like his master, knows sweet vows to weave :
And Frank, tho' not a Colonel, can deceive.

“ Was it for this ”—the fair in murmurs broke—
A sigh, half finish'd mingling as she spoke—
“ For this, when wiled the Countess and Her Grace
With busy canvass, for a single face,
And, not content in colder form to ask,
Half woo'd me to the *Concert* or the *Masque* ?
Was it for this, I heedless scorn'd them all,
And chose—O fool to choose the simple *Ball* !
Why, since some evil still our joy invades,
Why is not foresight given to mortal maids ?

“ O ! had I rather join'd the motley throng
Of crowns and crows, the sermon and the song,
Seen every age assume the freakish fit
And heard what folly fools can reckon wit :
Where, tho' the face be mask'd, the mind is spied,
—That glaring part which never mask could hide—
And mighty heirs of acres and renown
Appear, what nature meant them, *fool*, or *clown* ;

While Nymphs, who never read Minerva's fame,
Still know themselves a goddess *by the name*,
And, tho' unskill'd in action to express
The Power of Wisdom, show her *by her dress*,
That easy mark, which asks but vulgar eyes,
While darker wit speaks only to the wise.
Even then—for tho' my smile were hid from view,
Still my whole air might smile, and might subdue,
Kings, Sultans, Gods, I might have taught to bow,
Nor sigh'd—Ah wretch, to think and sigh,—as now!

“Nay, to the concert rather had I stray'd,
Tho' force'd to listen while the Duchess play'd,
To hear, in vain, her harp still tun'd and strung,
And list—O Powers of Music!—while she sung.
Sung Italy's soft strains, with British squeak;
No songs, but “dear Italia's,” fit to shriek!
O Roman words, to Roman ears unknown!
O airs, which even their authors could not own!
While the tir'd band, whose fiddlesticks must pause,
Shrink, and with smile of torture look applause!
What tho' to her the listless eye were rais'd,
And a dull stupor look'd as tho' it gaz'd,
Tho', heavier than with sleep, had yawn'd the hour,
That very langour had increas'd my power.
Some youth, his ears delighted to be free,

Had felt it doubly sweet to list to me ;
And waking to the joy anew, my face
Had owed—O strange !—a rapture to Her Grace.

“ Detested Ball !—with hopes so soon to fade,
What demon could seduce a gentle maid !—
Yet who but must have trusted hopes so fair,—
The gala crowded,—and the Colonel there !
He, for whose glance the Rout, the Opera, pine,
Whom smile could never fix, might yield to mine.
For well I heard—and I could trust the tale—
How at the birthday, when my cheek grew pale,
And the old Viscount, courteous as of yore,
With the quick gallantry of gay threescore,
Led me, half sinking, thro’ the opening rings
Of swords, and epaulets, and stars, and strings,
Sad gaz’d the brightest of the glittering band,
And much my ruffle prais’d, and more my hand.
If thus, all cumbrous, in that swell of dress,
I swooning vanquish’d, could the Ball do less ?
How did I hope to vex a thousand eyes !—
O glorious malice, dearer than the prize !
Yet well was taught my brow that pride serene,
Which looks no triumph, where no doubt had been,
That easy scorn, all tranquil as before,
Which speaks no insult, and insults the more,

And with calm air, the surest to torment,
Steals angry spite's last comfort, *to resent.*

“ Why was the triumph given ?—Too flattering joy !
Frail hour, which one frail minute could destroy !
He came—O hope !—He hasten'd to my seat ;
I saw, and almost dream'd him at my feet,
Close by my side, a gay attendant slave,
The glance, which thousands sought, to none he gave,
Scarce bow'd to nodding bevvies, when we walk'd,
Smil'd, when I smil'd, and talk'd, and laugh'd, and talk'd,
Held my light fan with more than woman's grace,
And shook the tiny zephyr o'er my face.
Why did I heedless trust the flattering sign,
As if no fan he e'er had broke but mine !
Ah simple fool ! Yet wherefore nurse the smart ?
The bauble he may break, but not my heart.

“ Even then, when, smiling to some gay reply,
Ere yet the laugh was hush'd I rais'd my eye,
And saw—What midnight spectre ever shone
So pale, so wild, so hideous?—saw sir John,—
That virtuous paragon, who knows no sin,
My latest conquest, and most hard to win,
To whom, for three long weeks, a perfect sage,
I played the sober gravities of age,

Preach'd what on Sundays,—yawning nights of dread—
My holy aunt thro' spectacles had read,—
Of sweeter smiles than giddy Beaux have given,
The smile of conscience, and the smile of Heaven,
Of wealth to all but to its owners sent.
And the dear duties of a life of Lent ;—
Some wonder still at Woman's wicked ways,
And grave rebuke of these declining days,
And ever added, as all joys above,
Some dovelike sentiment of constant love ;—
When sudden to my eye—O sight unfear'd !
That face, that formidable face, appear'd,
With look that, sad and speechless as a ghost,
Yet seem'd to say—Is this thy virtue's heart ?—
Even then—tho' paus'd my tongue, afraid to speak,
And something like a blush half-cross'd my cheek,
Soon to the air the passing cloud I cast ;
The Colonel's smile was gayer than the last ;
And—Love, alas ! tho' warm, so soon grows cold—
With a new swain before me and an old,
I bravely chose—as kings and heroes do—
And risk'd the ancient conquest, for a new.

“ Ah, conquest risk'd in vain !—Provoking fate,
That Flavia came, and that she came so late,—
Just enter'd, when, tho' sweet to say and hear,

The flagging nonsense ask'd another ear,
And smiles and well-shewn attitudes might fly,
And seem new graces to another eye.
New eyes, new ears, she brought.—Ah cruel change!
My heart was fix'd;—yet man, the wretch, could range.

“At widows’ wailings well may poets scoff,
Why should she come, to shew her weeds were off!
To change a dress is no such mighty part;
And none e’er thought she wore her crape at heart.

“O, if content some other to prefer,
His eye had turn’d to any flirt but *her*,
Tho’ lost the traitor, I had still been gay,
Still laugh’d, and smil’d, and shone the slight away.
But of the shame what comfort was there left,
When Flavia was the thief, and knew the theft;—
She who, to steal one conquest of my charms,
Woo’d him—’twas more than whisper’d—to her arms,
And, fearful of my power, to fix her right,
Won him to wed, and married him *in spite*.

“When to the supper-hall we mov’d along,
Why was I doomed to face her in the throng!
With what provoking kindness did she stand,
And loose her arm from his, to press my hand,

And beg, with well-feign'd sympathy, to know
Of headaches which I felt three months ago !
I smil'd, with looks which all my soul convey'd—
O ! had they but the power which bards have said !

“ What tho', as if unweeting of my shame,
The little Marquis all obsequious, came,
Mid giants, venturous, gave his arm to guide,
Less by the head, and rear'd him by my side,
With brilliant finger, made to be ador'd,
And gallant thumb, that daring cross'd the board,
The ice and jelly graceful gaye to sip,—
Eternal nothings dimpling from his lip :—
Till then, I knew not fops could have oppress'd,
Nor felt how hard to laugh without a jest !

“ Yet even that hour could end.—He saw advance
The ready throng, and call'd me to the dance.
Fool, did I think, that steps which never cease,
And arms unwearied, shew a mind at peace !
Alas ! too well with inward tumult suit
The dash and hurry of the busy foot.
With what impetuous grace the train I led,
And press'd the floor, with more than woman's tread ;
As, if, with every step, my heart, more gay,
Could fling the burthen of its grief away !

Yet was I doom'd to wait the music's flow;—
Sure never lazy music was so slow;—
And, tho' well-skill'd my swain the tune to meet,
Still slower than the music seem'd his feet.

“ Why danc'd not Flavia?—What in her could see
That faithless trifter, to prefer to me!
Tho' bloomier radiance on her cheek had shin'd,
A shop in Bond-street is not hard to find;
And, long before she bar'd her snowy arm,
All knew that magic powders have a charm.
If eyes like his can think her roses grow,
That glass he dangles is not worn for show.

Ah! had I gone as late!—Could Fortune's power
Invent no kind mischance to waste an hour!
Even cruel miracles she work'd in spite:
La Fleur, the false, could keep his word that night.
O! had he, tho' with loose and untrick'd hair,
I might have storm'd and fretted, in despair,
Had he, as wont, for *ten* but counted *nine*,
Sought Flavia's toilet first, then come to mine,—
Or had—What care I for a diamond's cost—
This bauble crescent been mislaid or lost,—
Or from my chariot, as with thundering zeal
It flashed along, but flown one noisy wheel,—

Then had I enter'd latest of the proud,
And walk'd, and look'd, and conquer'd, thro' the crowd,
The Colonel would have vied, in smiles and praise,
Nor Flavia's bloom been left one coxcomb's gaze.

" Ah wisdom dearly purchas'd !—Yet even fate
Can teach one useful lesson, *to be late* ;—
So shall my eyes their easy spoil secure,
And every triumph be, tho' shorter sure ;
No idle moment left for falsehood's tricks,
Love *must be true*, and even the fickle fix !
With my fresh smile in vain shall envy strive ;
And yawning Beaux shall see me and revive.

" No !—Hence away, ye dear delusive arts,
Ye anxious aims at ever-flying hearts !
Farewel each look and sound of labour'd guile,
The mirthless titter, and the joyless smile,
The glance, that, ever ready to be gone,
Now roves o'er crowds, now languishes on one,
Praise of the Beau, and malice of the Belle,
Dear wit, and dearer folly,—all farewel.

" No more for me shall conquests fill the hour,
With all the sweet anxieties of power,
To win some yet unvanquish'd lover's sigh,

Or stay the parting rebel, ere he fly,
That power, whose dearer myrtle wand to hold,
Even sceptred empresses forget their gold.
No more, my entrance hail'd with instant fame,
Shall the long rout run murmuring with my name,—
Or rivals, eager for my hand, advance,
And woo, not horrid marriage, but the dance,
Still, where I glide, a full voic'd crowd be found,
Tho' feebly buz the half-fill'd waste around—
My waited laugh to all of mirth the sign,
And the eyes dim, that catch no beam from mine.

“ Ah triumphs still too dear ! Ah glories gain'd
With many a toil, with more than toil retain'd !
What tho' the homage and the pride be lost,
How frail their tenure, and how dear their cost !
No ! Let this flaunt, and fight, and folly cease !
Even conquest they may shun, who fly to peace,
For what is all the joy, which conquest gives ?
To share the leavings of each flirt that lives.
No hearts around us languish and adore,
That have not flam'd and flutter'd at a score.
The silliest thing of eyes and lips, to sing
Her praise as goddess, finds some sillier thing :
The kindred charm o'er coxcombs has prevail'd,—
And Flavia triumphs, where my power has fail'd.

“ True, Flavia *would* be wise,—to Age and Youth
A miracle of sense, and charms, and truth.
Grave fluttering fools have sworn she has a *mind*,
And doat on wonders, which they never find.
But sure the Colonel could not so be caught ;
He woos no lessons, but where love is taught,—
Ne’er in gay routs, has sigh’d for college laws,
Nor doats and dies, for sentences and saws.
If some smart thing from Flavia fall by chance,
Who sees not, half the point is in her glance ?
And, tho’ her apophthegm be light as air,
Red are her lips,—and, O ! what wisdom there !
Who but must laugh, when round her pedants sit !
Can cheek, so blooming, need the aid of wit !
Ah happy toilet, where, with equal grace,
She lays the colours on her mind and face ;
Sees brighter reason in each blush arise,
And learns to *look* most beautifully wise !

“ Yet what even Flavia’s folly !—Tho’ to night,
Her air, her dress, her very rouge a fright.
She must have conquer’d, but by fate’s controul,—
Some charms *she* has, and something like a soul.
But who of loves and triumphs can be proud,
When every idiot laughter has her crowd ?

Fools reign o'er fools ;—and all our boasted sway
Is but to have as many fools as they.

“ Wretch ! have I lost my temper, bloom, and sleep,
To gain—what silly Celia could not keep !
Nay, worse, despair'd and fretted, pale and thin,
To keep, what even her rattle was to win !

“ No Celia now I dread.—The field of strife
I leave to her and Flavia, fools for life.
Let the whole huntress train, ambitious, start
Some gaudy thing, who thinks he has a heart,
To one short fame, to all but one disgrace ;
How Disappointment sits, and mocks the chase !
For fops and feathers, can such tumult glow !—
Ah ! why to happiness prefer a Beau !

“ Gay giddy hours, how often have ye seen
The aching heart belie the frolic mein !
Even when, the victress of the night, I led
Each virgin's spoils, and slew again her dead,
Half soft, half stately, languishing in pride,
With Love and Envy ever at my side,—
Even then, if, cold or better arm'd by chance
One stubborn heart repell'd my well aim'd glance,
The dream and luxury of power was o'er ;

Pride, praise, and pleasure, touch'd my soul no more,
That single heart outnumber'd all my train,
And thousand flatterers laugh'd and sigh'd in vain.

“ Or O ! what torment, when, in homage mix'd
The glance of every box on ours has fix'd ;
When our gay nonsense, loud as Jaffier's rage,
Has won, or forc'd each listener from the stage,
While angry Belvidera, in despair,
More fiercely sobs, and raves, and rends her hair,—
What torment then, to see some hateful thing,
That counts herself our rival, join the ring ;
To feel the spreading buz around us glow,
And, when we turn us to our favour'd beau,
To hear no laugh applaud our smartest jest,
And find his treacherous eye-glass with the rest !
How often have I laid my fan aside,
Lest fools might think its toss the fret of pride ;
Oft view'd the creature with calm smiling gaze,
And prais'd ; and strove to sicken all with praise,—
That the keen eye, in chase of charms, might halt,
And from pure contradiction seek a fault !

“ Such slights, such pang, can Beauty's peace destroy,—
Ah thoughtless fools, who count our empire joy !

“ How happier she, who in love’s tranquil bower,
Clasps the sweet *prize* of conquest, not the *power* ;
Who, while *one* gaze her charms to all prefers,
And *one* warm heart returns the warmth of hers,
Heeds not, tho’ crowds, to half her beauty chill,
Should deem some flirt of fashion fairer still ;
Who the light chain, by wedded dames abhorr’d,
Which many a year has bound her to her lord,
Wears like some bridal ornament of state,
Nor thinks a *husband* is a name of hate,
But hails his calmest smile, and still can bear
His sober gallantries with glowing ear !

“ Unknown to her ambitious Beauty’s fright,
When the sick morning shews the waste of night,
When sudden megrims shoot along the brow,
And all that charm’d the dance is darkness now ;
Lips, which no rouge relieves, as pale and dead
As mincing Mira’s, ere she bites them red,
And eyes like Fusac’s, that, at eighty free,
Still dimly ogle whom they scarce can see.
What pangs our toilet’s proudest hopes assail,
What fret, when robes, and wreaths, and tresses fail,
When all, which fancy destin’d to surpass,
Gleams cruel disappointment from our glass,—
Discordant shades, that blend not as they glow,

And stiff tight folds, that vainly strive to flow!
Her not the toilet's endless fret can tease,
Who pleases one, and seeks but one to please.
She, if her happy lord but gaze with pride,
Wears what he loves, and thinks no gem denied ;
And if, compliant with his wish, she roam
To the gay tumuks, which endear her home,
'Mid brighter fashions, and that pomp of waste,
Which glittering fools misname, and call it *taste* ;
Tho' not a pearl her simple hair have crown'd,
And lavish diamonds fling their beams around,
Can smile serene, nor feel one envy burn,
And sleep without a sigh, on her return.

“ She, if her charms, or chance, around her bring
Half the gay triflers of the crowded ring,
Now soft with one, and now with one all gay,
As the free tones of careless converse play,
Can share the Captain's laugh, nor fear the while
Lest angry Generals frown at every smile.
Ah! not like her, who half afraid, half bold,
Proud of new slaves, yet loth to lose the old,
When cruel fortune gathers round her throne,
Whom singly she had seem'd to love alone,
Must anxious manage every look and speech,
And deal the cautious tenderness to each.

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"Yes! ye tir'd band, whom never respite saves,
Ye slaves, still toiling 'mid your train of slaves!
Yes! there are joys even vanity above;—
Ambition, conquest, what are ye to *love*!

"And love awaits me still to bless my lot,—
Let but Sir John, this luckless night forgot,
Renew to-morrow what he oft has said;—
Even though no flatterer, he shall still persuade.
Not so to falsehoods have I lent my days,
As truth to hate, when sober truth is praise.
What tho', long ignorant of love, my heart
May take some little time to learn the art,—
Like waves, that fix not, tho' the breeze be past,
But frolic still, as if they wish'd the blast,—
I sure may learn, before the fatal hour,
Or wed, and love him, when I get the power.
Till then, if still my heart too warm may glow,
And with short flutter beat at every Beau,
One look of that grave eye will bid it cease,
And a few yawns soon lull it into peace.
O happy, when by practice, I succeed,
And, without yawning, love in very deed;
When, by his side, my daily round I walk,
His silence sweet, and sweeter still his talk,—
Hear him, like nature's judge, expound her laws,

Meek with moralities, and sage with saws ;
Or moralise myself, tho' half too young,
And wonder at the wisdom of my tongue ;—
On fields, where scarce a weed upon the sod.
Has grown unmark'd, and tracks for ever trod,
'Mid trees, unchang'd, since last we wander'd by,
And constant flowers—that never seem to die—
Call him, at every turn, some charm to see,
Which fifty times he earlier mark'd to me ;
Or when dear Winter lengthens Pleasure's day,
When Routs contend, and chariots stop the way,
Sit, the long noiseless night without desire,
And gaze on him, the kitten, and the fire !
Those joys I yet may learn before my grave,
Which virtue gives—at least which virtue gave,—
Gave, in the days, when never Beau was rude,
And all our great-great-grandmothers were good.
So shall I shine, what sage Sir John esteem'd
The holy, heavenly wonder, which I seem'd,
Mix'd of all virtues—neither young nor old—
What godly writers laud, and ne'er behold—
Do what they do not, turn to truth their cant,
And be, without her spectacles, my Aunt.

“ Yet what will Flavia say ? Shall *she* retain
The heart, 'twas hers by stratagem to gain,

With second triumph, in her thefts rejoice,
And think she *forc'd* me to a meaner choice!
—No! if to *one* my freedom I must yield,
The patient Baronet must quit the field.
I sure may wish, without coquetry's tricks,
To win *one other lover*, ere I fix;
But let the Colonel at my feet adore;
Past are my wanderings, and *I flirt no more*.

“Sooner shall maids who loath a single bed,
Elope to *Doctors Commons* to be wed;
And, some gay new gallant too fondly seen,
Find proctors and divorce, at *Gretna Green*;
Sooner shall man, who, in the marriage rite,
Boasts rule and lordship, be a husband *guite*;
And brides who vow to honour and obey,
The oath remember, and renounce the sway;
Each Opera-box at midnight prayer be seep,
And Sermons be, what Novels long have been,
Even Fashion's fickle self to change forget,
And turn a Quaker,—~~yet~~ I turn COQUETTE.”

THE PARADISE OF COQUETTES.

PART III. THE GENIUS OF COQUETRY.

ANALYSIS.

Address to the Spirits that watch over Woman, and record her vows. Portents that marked the vow of Zephyra. Descent of the Genius of Coquetry. Melodies that announce his approach. His appearance contrasted with that of Love. Comes at once to forgive and instruct her. Traces to her the mode by which he nursed her early feelings to his sway. Suggestions to her waking fancy. And in her dreams at night. Pred- stination of Beauty to the passions that await her. All Womankind divided as the future subjects of Coquetry or of Love. Description of the humble Band allotted to Love. Nobler character of the Votaries of Coquetry.

THE
GENIUS OF COQUETRY.

Ye watchful Sprites, who make even *man* your care,
And sure more gladly hover o'er the Fair ;
Who grave on adamant all changeless things,
The smiles of courtiers, and the frowns of kings !
Say, to what softer texture ye impart
The quick resolves of Woman's trusting heart,—
Joys of a moment, wishes of an hour,
The short eternity of Passion's power,
Breath'd in vain oaths, that pledge, with generous zeal,
Even more of fondness than they e'er shall feel,
Light fleeting vows, that never reach above,
And all the guileless changefulness of love !

Is summer's leaf the record? Does it last,
Till withering autumn blot it with his blast?
Or, frailer still, to fade ere ocean's ebb,
Grav'd on some filmy insect's thinnest web,
Some day-fly's wing, that dies, and ne'er has slept,
Lives the light vow, scarce longer than 'tis kept?
Ah! call not *perfidy* her fickle choice!
Ah! find not falsehood in an angel's voice!
True to *one* word, and constant to *one* aim,
Let man's hard soul be stubborn as his frame:
But leave sweet Woman's form and mind at will
To bend, and vary, and be graceful still!

And yet, if signs from Heaven the truth declare,
Even Woman's gentle vows are more than air:
Twice—as if Nature had to list been loth,
Or some strange terror trembled in an oath,—
When to *one* lover's eye, *one* lover's arms,
Rash Zephyra decreed her thousand charms,
Ere her bright lips could speak the fatal strain,
Which seem'd to doom them to be bright in vain,
Even on her quick and never-faltering tongue,
Twice, as by miracle, the sentence hung;
Twice, by some warning power unseen impell'd,
Creak'd the slow hinge, and shook the door it held,

And if it call'd again her breast to glow
At the dear sound, which once announc'd the beau;
To the far mirror twice her eye she rais'd,
And twice the unsuff'd taper brighter blaz'd,
Blaz'd, as to shew once more, in all their pride,
Those charms and graces, which 'twere guilt to hide.
Ah signs, ah miracles, how useless now!—
She vow'd;—and watchful Spirits heard the vow.

But hark!—What mighty presence fills the air?
He comes, he comes.—No common Power is there.
Sweet melodies reveal him as he flies,
Gay laughs, and whispers soft, and softer sighs,—
That living music, still to Beauty dear,
When lyres and lutes but sleep upon her ear.

Rous'd at the sound, the Fair, with glad amaze,
Turn'd from her ottoman her languid gaze,
And saw—strange transport thrilling thro' her dread,—
The heavenly form descending o'er her head.
Beauteous as Love he seem'd;—but gayer grace
Laugh'd in his smile, and sparkled o'er his face—
Like Love, when not of bliss he aims the dart,
But secret malice titters in his heart.
Loose beam'd his brow;—yet, tho' with bandag'd lid,

His very smile had shewn, what eyes were hid,
Quick even in softness, flinging daws of fire,
And sparkling more with triumph than desire :
Nor like to Love's the plumes on which he hung ;—
No backward pinion from his shoulder sprung.
But where the heart its changeful current flings,
Flow'd round his breast a beamy zone of wings.
Behind no quiver shook ;—no bowstring shone
With idle arrows, that can wound but *one*.
Each busy hand, to spread its triumphs wide,
Flash'd with the bolt, that flames on every side :
Loose o'er the right, one burn'd ;—with equal flame
The left, half-bent seem'd gathering for its aim.

In mid descent he paus'd.—A soft perfume
Flow'd as he wav'd his wing, thro' all the room,—
More sweet than zephyr, when he leaves the rose,
Or essenced breathings of a hundred beaux.
Then to the maid, whose half-instinctive eye
Smil'd to his smile, scarce conscious of reply,
As when her upward gaze was wont to meet
Some earthly flatterer bending o'er her seat,—
His balmy strain as bland he pour'd above,
As every murmur were a sigh of love,—

But hover'd still, with plumes unwearied press'd,
As if 'twere toil to fix, and pain to rest.

“Behold”—he whisper'd—“brightest of the gay!
Behold the Power, who gives thy charms their sway!
Tho' once, to Beauty's dear ambition cool,
Thy heart, in fancy, has abjur'd my rule,
No angry judge, sweet rebel, shalt thou fear,
I come to teach thee what 'tis pride to hear:—
So shalt thou save from second error live;
One pardon Fate allows, and that I give.

“Long ere those eyes, which now, their uses felt,
Can frown well pleas'd, and without fondness melt,
Had train'd their glances to thy will's controul,
But, arrant tell tales, spoke thy very soul;
Ere thy first fib, that trembled in the act,
While meaning falsehood stammer'd half the fact,
Unskill'd, as now, with easy grace of youth
To smile the ready fiction into truth;—
Even then I fond beheld thee, proud to claim
Thy future charms, and triumph in thy fame.

“For this, when feebler wishes scarce could start,
I nurs'd the glorious passion in thy heart,

Taught thee, with little smiles thy glass to fill,
And dress thy very doll with wanton skill,
Till thy young breast, its baby years above,
Could think of lovers, ere it knew of love.

“ In the calm eve of winter’s noisy day,
When thy gay aunt, and grandmother as gay,
—Thy stool, as wont, beside the honour’d seat,
And Puss and Pompey basking at their feet—
Sat by the well-swept hearth, whose brightening blaze
Woke with the warmth the joy of other days ;
While many a marvel rose, of years of old,
The tale still wonder’d at as oft as told,
For thee, I sought in that pure breast to find
Some vanity that linger’d still behind :
That peaceful pride I gently rous’d at last,
And fix’d thy ear, with tales of triumph past,—
Of sworded Lovers, coy as maidens now,
That hid each glance, and trembled at a vow ;
Of Belles, that blush’d to move along a crowd,
And Fops demure, that gravely stalk’d and bow’d ;
Then came the day of glory and delight,
Which crush’d her farthingale, and won her knight,
When young Sir Robert, squire and man complete,
Just master of his acres and his feet,

Crown'd the rude birth-day riot of his hall,
With all the solemn stiffness of a ball ;
When he, in flowing periwig of France,
And sleeves loose-waving, led her from the dance,
Then stumbled at her seat, and scarce could rise,
Struck with his own bright claret, and her eyes.
Rent was her ruffle, but unpierc'd her skin.—
Ah ! deeper wounds the Squire had felt within.
Half-clos'd his swimming eye still look'd above ;
And loss of senses is no loss to love.
New lace he sent, the pride of Mechlin's art,
And with the flowery nothing gave his heart.
Then when, half-proud, the matron deem'd thy ear
Intent the glories of that lace to hear,
With what inventive toil she fram'd the stuff,
How light the pinners, and how thick the ruff ;
Alas ! thy fancy, heedless of her skill,
With squires and periwigs was dancing still.

“So thro' each year, ere full its wings could spread,
Thy fluttering passion's little flights I led,
Warm as they rose, thy gleamy wishes caught,
Fix'd them with hope, and busied them with thought ;
And, that no sound or sight, from dreams of power
Might lead thee lost, for many an idle hour,

H

In all I gave thy happy skill to find
Some image, ever present, of thy mind,
Some tie, unseen by other eyes, that ran
From every dead dull thing to living man.
When thy stern uncle knit his gouty brow,
Who thought, how gay thy cousin's smile—but thou;
And at his long loud curse, or peevish frets,
Mus'd but on Love's soft oaths, and pouts and pets;
Even in dull pews, who smil'd, as beaux were there,
Heard songs in psalms, and earth's sweet vows in prayer;
To thy quick fancy equal church and ball;
Fops, fame, and flattery, present still in all.

“But, more than day, thy nights obey'd controul:
Then dreams divine came flowing o'er thy soul;
Lords at thy knee, meek warriors at thy side,
Their hearts all tenderness, and thine all pride:—
And, tho' the revelry of joy and power
Was hush'd, and vanish'd, at thy waking hour,
Yet, as when half seen fairies flit from view,
Soft steps still lightly live along the dew,
A strange sweet triumph still thy thought impress'd,
And more than fancy throb'd within thy breast.
If some gay brighter stripling woo'd,—at times
When prose unmeaning, more unmeaning rhymes,

And all the follies of Love's foolish art
Had half seduc'd to constancy thy heart,—
Then, in thy dream was heard a softer sigh,
Then thousand billets glow'd upon thine eye,—
Sweet songs of heaven, that, warm with fonder hopes
And fonder raptures,—froze all earthly tropes;
And when gay Susan, to surprise thee, sped,
With a fresh ditty, to thy morning bed,
Tho' balmier nonsense o'er the lay was shower'd
Than thrice ere sleep thy willing eye devour'd,
Chill yawn'dst thou, waking, at the love-scrawl'd strain;—
And the sad Ensign rhym'd and rav'd in vain.

“Smil'st thou?—Ah lovely smiler! hast thou guess'd,
What Power with those bright visions warm'd thy rest,
When glittering dreams, that wrapt thee fresh from sway,
With pride unbroken fill'd the pause of day,
While sleep but multiplied a swifter throng,
And plumes, and smiles, and sword-knots, swept along?

“O early with divinest wishes fir'd,
Awake fulfilling what thy dream inspir'd!
If with that gratitude thy bosom swell,
Which suits the happy bosom of a Belle,
Nor e'er has fail'd in kind and courteous deed,

When homage won, and fashion judg'd the meed ;—
If never billet, such as claims reply
From duteous maid, long vainly ask thine eye,
When, in soft thanks for rhymes less softly sung,
Glides thy light quill, as fluent as thy tongue ;—
Even in that trustless intercourse which blends
Spite, envy, flattery, when the fair are friends,
When she thou hatest, her anxious soul to pour,
Has sent her card, to thunder at thy door,—
Fit proxy of her heart, and mind, and fame,
Half blank, half scrawl, a title and a name,—
If then thy well-remembering conscience burn,
Till Harry *bear thy visit* in return,—
Behold, O fair and grateful ! nor alone
To mortals be that sweet observance shewn,
But, conscious of thy panoply of charms,
Bless the glad Power, who train'd thee to thy arms !

“ Yes ! when around thee youths o'er youths shall gaze,
Catch the far glance, and spread the swelling praise,
When all is triumph to thy ear and eye,—
Ah ! would'st thou then ~~the~~ empire thankless fly,
Who, sure thy destin'd worship to retain,
Without thy heart the homage would disdain !

“ Know, that of all the legions of the Fair,
Who charm this earth, and breathe this mortal air,
Fate, who ne’er heeds how butchering warriors kill,
And leaves dull statesmen to be fools at will,
Has fixed the softer power,—mid joys and wiles,
A willing sovereign of the world of smiles.
Even thou, O loveliest subject of her throne!
Who think’st thy sweet caprices are thy own,
Charm’st, as an earlier sway the charm ordains,
And, when thou conquer’st, conquer’st but in chains.
When the world’s future victors, slumbering mute,
Shook at the rocking of a menial’s foot;
While one dull chamber clasp’d, with narrow wall,
Eyes, to which soon half London would be small,
And little shrinking breasts, of man afraid,
Thought love was meant but for their nurse and maid;
Even then had Fate assign’d the mighty part,
And counted every flutter of the heart,
Seen, in her careless frock still smiling free,
The scold and flaunt of toilets yet to be,
And eyes, that knew not how a glance should glow,
Ere yet they wept the rattle, win the Beau.

“ Whatever Beauty pines, or pants, or raves,
All the soft sex of sovereigns and of slaves,

Who for one lord in servile fondness sigh,
Or proudly see their hundredth captive die,
To Love and me were given—to me the best,
O glorious destiny!—Be Love's the rest!

“ All who, unskill'd to vanquish and controul,
Without ambition, scarcely have a soul,
Too weak the varying charm thro' crowds to guide,
And tho' all own'd the charm, too cold for pride,
Who sink beneath that heart they cannot sway,
Till tir'd they give the heavy thing away,
And free, and pleas'd their burthen to unpack,
When once they loose it, dread to take it back,—
Virgins, who only know to blush and weep,
And wives, sage wives, who, wiser, know to sleep,
Who, while their single slave can fill their view,
Think *one*—O rude in numbers!—more than *two*;
These Love unenvied won—a cheerless train:—
Bright rose the fated subjects of my reign,
Hearts whose gay dream no nightly murmur robs,
Which find no melody in self-heard soba.
But, when they listen to a tender moan,
Prefer the sighs of others to their own,—
High-daring souls, that ever climb above,
And make each lover's breast a step to love,

That even a crowd, when vanquish'd can despise,
And while *all* gaze, still look for other eyes.—
Such—O still more belov'd and honour'd more,
O worthier to be worshipp'd than adore !
Such, ever beauteous, at my altar bow,
Themselves divine.—O loveliest, such art *thou* ;
And, tho' no other priestess bent the knee,
Rich were his empire,—who could boast of *thee*."

THE PARADISE OF COQUETTES.

PART IV.

CELESTIAL FLIRTATION.

ANALYSIS.

influence of flattery in giving freedom to the tongue. Zephyra, recovering from her awe, and restored to all the graces of her native and habitual character, coquets with the very Genius of Coquetry. Emboldened by the praise of her charms, and eager to know the extent of her predestined power, she entreats a glimpse of the future. Is checked by the Genius, who explains to her the loss of happiness, which would arise from foresight of the particular conquests that await her, but comforts and animates her, by pictures of general triumph. Feigned indifference, with which, as in mere mortal flirtation, she affects to disregard the very triumphs of which she is ambitious. Overcome at last by the force of one terrifying argument, the only argument in logic which Beauty is unable to resist.

CELESTIAL FLIRTATION.

STRANGE power of praise!—What sudden rapture glow'd,
And loos'd even awe to gladness, as it flow'd!
She, to whose tongue, when man that tongue could hear,
Five silent minutes seem'd a little year,—
Save when at church she sat in decent guise,
Love's sweetest saint, and talk'd but with her eyes;
Who, when gay warring scandals flash'd askance,
Had still her wit as ready as her glance,
Or, with soft foplings, unperplex'd by thought,
Could turn for hours their nothings into nought;
She, by the heavenly Presence awed, had hung
Mute, as if love or ice had seal'd her tongue,

Heard all his tedious boasts, with silence meet,
And, stranger still, had felt even silence sweet ;
But, when the sound, which still 'tis joy to hear,
The voice of flattery, touch'd her kindling ear,
A softer splendour seem'd around to glow,—
The heavenly Power but look'd a brighter Beau ;
Smiles o'er her cheek ran waving, and her eye
Gleam'd, as when sparkling for a gay reply :—
Yet, ere she spoke, she drew with graceful charm
The shawl light-floating, o'er her snowy arm.

Then with a brighter smile,—not such as springs
When Beauty sweetly talks unmeaning things,
But that full softness, kept for highest hours,
When, proud in hope, she gathers all her powers,—
The fair began,—“ O not by fate, but choice,
Lord of this heart still throbbing with thy voice !
If the fond loyal faith of years atone
The single vow rebellious to thy throne,
Give—since my path is doom'd—not wholly dark,
One little vista of my way to mark.
These eyes, tho' lovers, who in oaths delight,
And bards, whose trade is falsehood, swear them *bright*,
Too dim, to see whom next their power shall thrall,
Scarce know the slave they conquer, ere he fall,

Ah! let thy pure celestial radiance teach
 What orbs of earthly gleam are weak to reach!
 Say, shall that ever-wedding simperer's arms,
 Seduce the proud apostate of my charms,
 Or the dear penitent her chains resign,
 And Flavia die with spite to see him mine?
 Then—but O! mock not thus!—may never Beau—
 —What smiles't thou still!—this glance as fatal know!
 Yet say,—if fools should fall—who next shall bend?
 Not that I wish even one.—Nay! heaven forefend!
 Fearful I ask, in pity of their pain,
 To know what gentle hearts must sigh in vain!"

"Forbear," he cried, "nor seek, with sure regret,
 Ah heedless! what 'twere wisdom to forget!
 Enough—This knowledge safe may be allow'd—
 As proud the past, the future shall be proud.
 Why, by a moment's wasteful foresight, lose
 The sweet uncertainties thy soul pursues,
 Or think, the languid triumph still were dear,
 Without the toil to win it, and the fear?
 When the gay youth, who knows thee but by fame,
 First from thy glance receives the shaft of flame,
 How poor the joy, if, while with careless grate
 He laughing prais'd thy feather or thy face,

Thy soul had seen each tender visit paid,
Rhymes yet unstol'n, and perjur'd vows unmade,—
With unscrawl'd billets tir'd thy fancy's view,
Yawning for that which never could be new!
Then is the throb of conquest, then the charm,
When the proud bliss still trembles with alarm,
When half-despair'd, yet fix'd by Beauty's skill,
At length the flutterer hangs upon her will.

“Why for thy swain is Flavia still thy dread?
Even in thy mirror, may thy fate be read.
Think of thy wit, behold again thine eyes!—
The *brighter, lovelier, gayer*, wins the prize.”

So spake the Power.—Like oracles of old,
Doubtful and dark, the mystic fate unroll'd.
Clear to the virgin's breast it beam'd delight;
No mirror needed she, to make it bright:
Yet o'er her joy a shadowy thought would flit,
Of fools who talk'd of Flavia's charms and wit,
And with that passing thought, a pang would steal,
Which, if not fear, was what the fearful feel.

With glance as quick as Love's all conscious eyes,
The heavenly Presence saw that pang arise,

Saw, pi-ying ;—and, more instant to relieve,
Than gentle virgins when their lovers grieve,—
Skill'd in that charm, which saddest Beauty lists,
That sole sure solace, which no grief resists,
“ Why thus on *one*,” he cried, “ thy wishes thrown ?
Flames the gay epaulet on one alone ?
Along the Park would no bright courser speed,
If the sad ring should miss one sluggish steed ?
Tho' mute a single tongue shall *all* be still !—
Fades then my empire, if *one* heart be chill !—
O-form'd to conquer Colonels yet unseen !
Let fifty powder'd warriors hail thee queen,
Thy page to that of Kings preferr'd, forget
All glorious with their rank the last gazette,
For thee on haughty field days spread their line,
Nor heed reviewing Princes' eyes for thine !
Let statesmen, colder than their tinsel strings,
Who ne'er knew *queens*, save wedded dames of kings,
And all their frugal courtship, kept to bend
Knave-sending boroughs, and the knaves they send,
Bow, as thy hand the seals could shake at will,
And, quick seducers, own thee quicker still !
Soft round thy seat, a sable simpering throng,
With words of nothing and with voice of song,
Let gentle priestlings give thee airs for airs,

And almost deem thy graces sweet as theirs,
Gaze on thy cheek, half envious of its glow,
And press, with rival hand, thy hand of snow,
When banns are read, thy lovely image see,
And, as they sigh for mitres, sigh for thee!

“Such be thy wider glories!—To my glance
Even now in future pomp what crowds advance—
The laughing, sighing slaves, that, gay or dumb,
Hang on thy smile, in galas yet to come!
What spreading hopes thy morning thought employ;
What joyous night, succeeding nights of joy!—
—Yet thou, dissembler, for those triumphs born!—
Ah! canst thou look, as if thy glance were scorn!

“Nay! while that lovely soul before me lies,
All clear, and bright, and open, as thine eyes,
Loose thy full bosom’s happiness, nor feign
What proudest hearts shall covet, to disdain!
Even *thou* wouldst envy,—could the power, which glows
In thine, e’er beam from any orbs but those.”

He ceas’d,—but, pausing, cast so soft a gaze,
The very look still seem’d to utter praise;
Nor slow the Maid to answer.—Yet, what art

Binds thy soft fetters, Custom ! round the heart !—
Tho' well she knew the Power, that listening hung,
Mark'd each quick impulse of her eye and tongue,
Not less the sweet dissembler's ready guile
Plann'd every glance, and measur'd every smile ;
Not less, tho' conscious that her thought was known,
Spoke the bright falsehoods, dim to beaux alone.

As, when the flowery bands, which Hymen weaves,
Like other flowers have shed their faded leaves,
And nought remains, which Love delighted wore,
Save the chill fetters which they hid before,—
If then, by chance—Such wonder *chance* may see—
Meek Beauty's wishes, and her lord's, agree,
Should he all-courteous *no*—as husbands ought ;
The very whim her secret fancy sought ;
That whim is fled :—a sudden sickness springs ;
And all which charm'd her once are hateful things :
Strange follies now her piercing wisdom hits ;
She rails, and rallies, laughs, and pouts, by fits :
—Thus, when on Zephyra's exulting ear
Flow'd the proud strain, prophetically dear,
That, to her secret dreams of rapture true,
With every vision which 'twas sweet to view,
Yet claim'd no homage, for the triumphs spread,

But soft avowal of that joy they fed ;
Still, as with fonder suit the Genius press'd,
Her tongue withholding what her heart confess'd,
The more that stubborn tongue the charm denied,
Graceful to feign, and eloquent to hide.

“Ah flatterer!”—she exclaim’d.—A glance the while
Was meekly rais’d, with more than half a smile ;
Then, ere the smile could full its orb attain,
The soft and snowy eyelid sunk again.—
“Mock not, like man !—these idle eyes, that gleam,
Alas, too conscious of their feeble beam,
Careless of hopes that suit the fair and proud,
To charms, which know to vanquish, leave the croud.
Yet, tho’ this glance so dull, and duller tongue,
Were all which rhyming fools have falsely sung,
Tho’, at my smile, each torpid heart awoke,
And Beaux, even Beaux, grew sages when I spoke,
Why should I toils of fruitless conquest choose,
Slow winning whom to win is swift to lose ?
See, the long labours of a winter past,
The prize of routs, balls, operas, won at last,—
That haughty victor, at whose heart untam’d,
The glance on others bent, was secret aim’d.
And smiles, and whispers, which gay foppings near

Thought fondly destin'd for *their* eye or ear,—
Unconscious cause of many a grave debate,
When flower and feather pois'd the scales of fate,
Unconscious cause of many a wrathful tone,
When Susah suffer'd, for a guilt unknown—
Now, yielding, melting, glowing, every look
Bright with what never dullest nymph mistook,
The soft, yet easy insolence, whose air,
Bids rival Beaux, and rival Belles, despair,
He comes, with all a lover's tender pride,
And lists, and laughs, and rattles, at our side.
But who shall triumph, when the very gaze,
That owns us sovereign, in the suit it pays !
Ere yet we count our conquest, or have told
Each doubtful feature, to be kind or cold,
Nay, worse, ere Flirts, with envious anger pale,
Have broke one fan, or clubb'd one spiteful tale ;
Turns, while we catch the half-unfinish'd vow,
And seeks its answer from *another* brow.
Man *may* be true—to do the creature right—
If every Belle, but one, be shut from sight :—
But, bring a second flutterer on the field,
And Lords, and Squires, and cruel Colonels, yield.
Has honour then no sway, and can we find
Nor faith, nor conscience, in that guilty kind ?

Thou know'st, divinest Power ! could woman's art
Still charm, as when 'twas won, the conquer'd heart,
This bosom, in thy happy worship free,
Would ask no empire, but a slave to thee.
Then round my step the glittering throng might glow,
And nonsense echo sweet, from Beau to Beau !
But, since the savage, whom no vows perplex,
Hastes from our feet, to kneel to half the sex,
So swiftly perjur'd, that in vain we try
To give the wretch one rival ere he fly ;
What boots the baffled toil of every hour,
To spread from heart to heart a fading power,
As if our haste could Love's caprice excel,
More quick to conquer, than our slaves rebel !
Alas ! the brittle links, we bind in vain,
Burst, if a single yawn but stretch the chain ;
And on some new-won captive ere we cast
Our ready fetters, we have lost the last.
Ah ! rather—for, in man's perfidious race
Perhaps *one* constant heart may still have place,
And in that sole adorer I may see
A train as wide, as if I bow'd to thee—
Ah ! rather let me, with that heart content,
Try, what the fools, who boast of love, have *means* !
Tho' sweat to feign, when conquest crowns our skill,

Perhaps to feel it may be sweeter still.
Oft have I read, and heard, of raptures caught
In mutual wishes and consenting thought,
Strange joys like that from dullest chords which spring,
When Music well has pair'd the sleepy strings.
Perhaps—for who shall say, that all are wiles?
Affection *may* be more than tongue and smiles.
Some hidden charm, which gentle seers, who reach
The secret heart's soft mysteries, may teach,
Yet, trust me, not forgetful of thy flame,
Oft shall my bosom own thy early claim;
And tho' itself in happy patience blest
With the calm worship of a single breast,
At least for others sake, the guilt deplore
Of man, the traitor, who denies us more."

The Genius heard,—and, with a look of fire,
That laugh'd, with mockery of upbraiding ire,—
Sweet as when virgins bend an angry glance,
That frowns, yet seems as if it frown'd by chance,
When soft kind eyes are fix'd, in modest pride,
On daring youths, who scarcely think they chide;
"Doubt'st thou my glorious tale?" half stern he said,
"Doubt'st thou thy prophet, too presumptuous Maid?
Nay, bolder infidel to power divine!

No frowns of monarchs like one smile of thine ;—
Ah ! canst thou, while thy very triumph glows,
Doubt, what sure empire waits on charms like those ?
The haughty sex, which bends at Beauty's knee,
May pay short vows, but, loveliest ! not to *thee*.
No more inconstant, at thy sweet controul,
New faith, new joy, shall renovate the soul :
The truant, fix'd, and wondering at his flame,
Shall give his heart the praise thine eyes may claim.

“ Be man's to worship !—But, that doom above,
O happier, nobler ! canst *thou* think of love,
Watch from one weary tongue thy sole renown,
Starve on a smile, or wither at a frown ?
No ! In the noontide ring, or midnight dance,
'Mid future slaves, that wait but for thy glance,
Rise to thy destiny's unbounded scope ;
Be all—be more than all thou dars't to hope !
Yet if, disdainful of that glorious sway,
Which calls a world to see thee, and obey,
Thy sluggish heart from power and praise would creep,
With lazy love to sigh itself to sleep ;
Hops't thou to charm as now ?—O vainly fair !
Think, what that smile would suffer, and forbear !
That smile !—Alas ! no more, with playful gleam,

Exhaustless sweetness from its orb would beam,
As when gay epaulets around thee hung,
And love soft-titter'd from each warrior's tongue;
But a dull simper ever-faint would dawn,
Cold as a frown, and languid as a yawn,
Why waste fresh splendours on a single swain,
Whom, vanquish'd once, thou canst not win again!
Ah no! If groves, and parlour glooms, confin'd
That boundless radiance, which might warm mankind,
Nor thronging eyes those looks of homage cast,
Which wake new beauties, while they praise the past,
The freezing dullness, which no rapture cheers,
Would do, in hours the cruel work of years,
Steal from thy form some animated grace,
Or quench some living lustre in thy face.
Perhaps—for who could 'scape such drowsy lot?
Thy very art of conquest half forgot,
Even thou, in sloth habitual, lost to fame,
Might'st sink, scarce brighter than some nursery dame,
Who rocks her bantling, pickles pods in state,
And cooks the caudle of her gouty mate.

“Nay trust not to thy mirror!—Bend not there
That laughing look, which says it *must* be fair!
Mock'st thou my threat, in conscious charms secure?

Alas! thy very charms but make it sure,
Love's piteous slaves, their little passions caught,
Act their dull scenes, without one rebel thought,
Proud of their tiny triumph, and content
To be the silly things which Nature meant.
But thou,—whose early glories to fulfil,
The sweet ambition soon inspir'd the skill,
Form'd for a sway imperial, should'st thou deign,
The idle Phyllis of some idle swain,
To join the fools, who sit in pairs apart,
And prattle fondness from pure sloth of heart,
What would thy conscious charms, but cloud thine eye
With fretful glooms, as sullen as thy sigh,
Till, sick, and scornful of each wasted hour,
Too chill to melt, and weak by very power,
Thy smile, reluctant to be kind, would yield
To half the ceaseless simperers of the field :—
As some proud actress, skill'd to shake the soul,
Born but to rave, or stab, or drink the bowl,
If chance assign a meek attendant's part,
Still moves, a queen, and errs with all her art,
By the dull mute surpass'd, who, train'd to hear,
Holds her white handkerchief, and lends an ear.
Even while, the weary fondness to fulfil,
On the same eyes thou fain would'st languish still,

Some proud remembrance, starting in thy breast,
Would turn the mawkish tenderness to jest,
Freeze the warm smile, the light caress restrain,
Till grace itself seem awkwardness and pain."

She heard, and shudder'd,—as her smile, too true,
Already felt the dulling gloom he drew.

"Nay, shrink not," cried the Power.—"From love's
chill sway

Thy heart shall guard.—That faithful heart obey!

In all thy grace of triumph fearless shine!

Fate doom'd thee still to charm,—that doom'd thee mine."

K

THE PARADISE OF COQUETTES.

PART V.

THE CESTUS OF LEVITY.

ANALYSIS.

Ever-ready eloquence of the Female tongue. Gracious semblances of continued opposition, with which a lovely disputant yields, without seeming to be vanquished. To impress Zephyra fully with the glorious privileges of her fate, the Genius prepares to favour her with a sight of the Paradise, in which, after earthly coquetries have ceased, the immortal coquette renews and continues through immortality, the delights which she only began in the drawing-rooms and groves below. Gravitation of Woman, which confines her to those drawing-rooms and groves of earth. Cestus of Levity, by the aid of which she may rise, wherever her wishes lead her. Description of the tissue; of the pictures with which it is adorned. The Genius invests Zephyra with the Cestus. He ascends, and Zephyra with him.

THE
CESTUS OF LEVITY.

Yes, Woman, yes !—Tho', in his pompous school,
Man proud may learn to think and talk by rule,
Thine is the native eloquence, whose grace
Flows true to every hour and every place ;—
That, with a swain familiar, can recal
Scenes, persons, things, and spread delight on all ;
Or find, as fluent, if unknown the youth,
In mutual ignorance gay stores of truth.
No theme thou need'st, accordant thoughts to strike ;
On something, nothing, all things, sage alike :—
Enough, to wake thy eloquence and lore,
Ears that can list, and eyes that can adore.

Hence that gay tongue, which never could decline
Of warring Beaux the courteous strife benign,
Had dar'd even heavenly combat;—and tho' sway'd
One argument's dire force the vanquish'd maid;
For ne'er could loveliest baffler of the wise
Scorn the keen proof, that argues *to her eyes*,—
She yielded, but as Woman bends her will,
That, even submitting, gently combats still.

“Mock not,” she cried, “proud victor! nor contend,
That soft coquettings never have an end!
By half the host of wives, or—if I dare
An oath so stable,—by this heart I swear,
Who to fond crowds her lavish smiles has cast,
May wed, and be a sober mate at last.
Knows't thou not Anna? Who, like her, could fling
An eye of wide allurements o'er the ring,
Mark, at a glance, thro' hundreds beaming gay,
Whate'er the rout could offer to her sway,
Then aim the steady charm, at distance true,
And win the trifier, ere his foe he knew!
Now see her wedded!—Since her bridal morn
Thrice has the moon renew'd its double horn,
And soon again that crescent light shall shed
Its gentle radiance on Sir Jacob's head;
Yet, as still shone the hymeneal star,—

Scarce loos'd the doves that yok'd the marriage car ;—
Who, like Sir Jacob, wins from Anna's eye
The glowing fondness ?—" Yes ! when crowds are nigh.
O dull or jestful ! seest thou not, when light
Those tender glances on her booby knight,
Well knows the dame, how warm the soften'd gaze,
When love seems melting in the humid blaze ;
What beauteous things a husband's licensed cheek
Allows the decent wedded eye to speak ;—
While, as with envious anger they adore,
Each youth but hates her fool, to love her more,
How sure she counts her vanquish'd, as they yield,
Tho' scarce a glance seem wandering o'er the field,
When, meekly heedless, as nor eye nor ear
Could mark a worshipper, tho' crowds were near ;
Each look divinely fix'd in matron grace,
On the broad folly of Sir Jacob's face,—
With secret throb she views her victims fall,
Tho' languishing on *one*, still kind to *all*.

" What nymph can change her fate ? A rebel's part
Tho' each may play, she still is true as *hearts*.

" So, when that simpering thing of smiles and bloom,
Love's slave, nor worthy of a prouder doom,

Thy cousin Martha, when her lord is nigh,
Toils to be faithless, with unwilling eye,
Affects the triumphs of thy glorious arms,
And deals around her little stock of charms,
In vain, with frolic airs, and jest, and song,
She laughs, and flirts, and flutters, to the throng;
Still bursts by fits, thro' all her art's controul,
The humble passion of her humble soul,
Fond of her fool, to *him* her wishes cling,
Faithful, with eyes that ogle half the ring.
Even when soft striplings bend around her chair,
With looks which only lovers know to wear,
Instinctive turns her smile, her lord to see,
And seems to say,—all this I leave for thee.

“Yet pause I not forgetful? Ah too sweet,
To dwell, forgetting all things, at thy feet!
Come, ever-favour'd! on thy glance shall rise
What never beam'd till now on mortal eyes,
That happier world, where, earth's brief triumphs past,
Short Routs, and short-lived Beaux, forgot at last,
The deathless charmer finds, in realms more gay,
Immortal pleasure in immortal sway.
Come to the bowers of joy!—Their air divine
Breathe—and then murmur, that the home is thine!

“ In many a musing dream, by fancy wrought,
That home shall rise in sweet acts on thy thought.
Whene’er, ’mid rival firts, thy heart shall swell
At little slights, that fret the happiest Belle ;
—If some cold fop beside thee heedless sit,
Or, at thy gayest sally, rail at wit,
Or, eloquent on eyes of every hue,
To dazzling black prefer the languid blue,
Or, when thy gracious arm had doom’d to lean,
Snatch from the box some laughter of fifteen,—
Then, swift to comfort, ere a sigh shall start
Of half-rebellious sadness in thy heart,
Diviner hopes shall calm each angry thrill,
And the sweet future keep thee faithful still:
Come !—’Tis the world of Earth’s bright victors.—See,
Who smil’d, and shone, and almost charm’d like thee !”

He said ;—and from his arm all loosely thrown,
Soft-floated round the fair a filmy zone,
With narrower circle close and closer press’d,
And clasp’d, as by some kindred charm, her breast,—
Cestus of potent Levity, to wing
From earthly bondage free each ponderous thing,
Thro’ worlds ethereal give the fair to glide,—
That only angel power at birth denied.

Yes! tho' her heart, all volatile, may gleam
With wishes lighter than a spirit's dream,
She, whose gay wishes dance with pleasure's glow,
Has still *one* gravity which sinks below,
One living warm attraction, sure to bind,
Which draws her to the orb, *that bears mankind*.
If, thro' their distant spheres when planets pass,
To lifeless masses tend each lifeless mass,
What wonder, that, by charm as potent sway'd,
To living crowds should tend the living maid!
That human bond she feels her soul intral,
Floats amid Routs, and centres to the Ball.
But let the zone its buoyant power impart,
With gossamery lightness round her heart,
From earth she shakes her unincumber'd robe,
And mounts, and scorns this coxcomb-bearing globe.
What skill the Cestus wrought?—What laughing power
Plann'd the strange tissue, in some frolic hour!
The purest of the joyous tribes, that reign
Where dull-eyed sages deem one vast inane,
That dance on ether, or, with playful race,
Urge the slow sunbeams thro' the wilds of space,—
Light Essences, that mock all gross compare,
And look on Sylphs, as Sylphids on the fair,—

Smil'd round the woof, while one, with busy hand
And eye now gay now serious, wove the band.

Aërial were the threads ;—but nicest art
From air too gross had cull'd a purer part
What summer suns exhale, in many a gem,
Fresh from the drooping lily's shower-wash'd stem,
These watch'd the spinster-sprite, the softest chose,
And loos'd from odours mingling as they rose.
Then, to due levity to purge the mass,
Thro' Woman's gentle lips she bade it pass.
In tender oaths,—such oaths, from morn to eve,
As pious virgins swear, and youths believe,—
Of endless love, in endless pledges told,
As if the last were felt too frail to hold,
And parting anguish, of as constant pain,
Which nought can solace, but another swain,—
Her momentary soul as breath'd the fair,
Still light and lighter grew the glowing air,
Till, by soft lips with softest pressure wrought,
The very accents scarce out-weigh'd the thought.
Thus fitted to her fancy's sportful doom,
She gave the well-breath'd lightness to the loom.
Each fibre was some passion's tender proof,
And vows, and transports, liv'd along the woof.

With sunny rays inwove, not such as fall,
One massy splendour, from the central ball,
But tints that with divided lustre glow,
Half-bright, half-humid, from the watery bow,
Gay gleam'd the web, with emblems meet design'd,—
The charms and fates of gentle womankind.

First, on the band, the merry Sprite above
Had wrought a simple tale of *virgin love*.
'Twas glowing noon.—A woodbine's flowery shade
Threw softer sunshine o'er a youth and maid :
With childhood's tender charms, but woman's air,
Of soul than years maturer seem'd the fair :
Yet well those tender charms could look, untaught,
What practis'd dames ascribe to *time* and *thought*.
Half-seen afar, a little winged Power
Smil'd, as he pointed to another bower ;
Nor smil'd unmark'd.—But tho' her watchful glance
Had seen the love-announcing form advance,
Still seem'd her gaze, as soft it turn'd again,
One only bower to know, one only swain.
In parting guise she stood :—the impatient Belle
First press'd the hand, first spoke the slow farewell ;
Yet, as the clasp were *his*, and sadly true
Her voice but *echoed* his too quick adieu.

Even while she urged him lingering, still her eye
Seem'd fondly saying, " why so swift to fly ?"

Next, on the central tissue, group'd the Sprite
The festive presence of some sacred rite.
An altar blaz'd divine.—A priest was there,
And, girt by gentle bands, a gentler pair :
The *maid* was she, whose smile of tender truth
Glow'd in the bower ;—of aspect new the *youth*.
The Marriage Power had fled ;—but, in his place,
A little winged Form, with sprightlier grace,
Trail'd his long robe, his torch more widely swept,
And dash'd its sparks around, where'er he stept.
Precepts and prayers the sacred lips had given :—
Young was the priest, nor shap'd for only Heaven.—
The wedded fair her downcast eyes had rais'd,
Blush'd to her lord, and mark'd who fondliest gaz'd,
Then turn'd her from the crowd :—the blessing ceas'd,
Her parting glance seem'd lingering on the priest,
Not coldly thankful, as for office due,
But soft, as virgin's look, when virgin's woo.

A different scene the verge was wrought to shew :
Pale grace, and all the beautiful of wo.
Afar, 'mid blazing tapers, o'er the dead

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Its hundred plumes a pall funeral spread :
While, on a couch, to softer pomp resign'd,
In widow'd loveliness, a dame reclin'd.
With limbs, a nice disorder taught to keep,
And half-closed eyes, that almost seem'd to weep,
She leant ;—and, duteous to her lord's remains,
Mus'd all the merits of a crowd of swains,
Careful, no worthless mate to give the past ;
To her so kind, and ah ! so dead at last.
Already many a page of soft relief
Had sooth'd with all the gallantries of grief
On *three* she paus'd.—When three so equal woo,
Alas that *one* must be preferr'd to *two* !
The billets, that perplex'd her fancy's sway,
On the rich prayer-book's massy crimson lay ;
The rest, with psalms and sermons, ne'er to roam,
Were heap'd beneath a holier, massier tome.
Where near a mirror beam'd, and flung a wreath
Of glory on the toilet's shine beneath,
'Mid hoods and scarfs, and all the sable art
Which heals with outward grief the inward heart,
The solemn silk, the crape of sadder power,
Dull *weeds*, that brighter shew sweet Beauty's flower,
There the same winged form again was seen,
In heavenly service to his mortal queen.

What folds would best a tender sorrow speak,
What shades to lovelier langour melt the cheek,
For her, each gloomy vestment had he tried,
Intent to cull, but cautious to decide.
One cap, whose gather'd crape divinely hung,
On his own head the pigmy Power had flung,
To scan its brighter grace.—The folds, that bound
The front half hid him, as they clos'd around :—
Yet thro' them gleam'd his eyes, with laughing wile;
And the clear mirror glisten'd with his smile.
So wove, so pictur'd, was the band that press'd
The softest tissue, on the softest breast.

“Come to thy future realm!”—the Genius said,
As the light cestus clasp'd the wondering maid.
“Be this thy wafture!—Chain'd no more below,
Fly on thy wish, where'er a wish can go!
Not Beaux alone thy will all-powerful speeds.—
Come!—follow fearless, where thy Genius leads!”

She heard,—and swift our world of sunshine cross'd;—
And Earth perceived not, that its charm was lost.

THE PARADISE OF COQUETTES.

PART VI. THE STAR OF PARADISE.

ANALYSIS.

By the aid of her Cestus, Zephyra passes, with the rapidity of a wish, through a region of innumerable worlds—arrives at the Star of Paradise.—The massy radiance, which, like a circle of sky, incloses the bowers of the happy. Cave of entrance. Death and her band of Maladies. The *Purgatory of Coquettes*, in which all earthly sins against the Power to whose service they were devoted are expiated, before the new immortals become worthy of admission into the Paradise. Description of various forms of penance, proportioned to the differences of guilt. The Genius of Oblivion, and his goblet of forgetfulness. Opening of the Cave. Paradise.

THE
STAR OF PARADISE.

QUICK as a virgin's thought, that o'er the main
Speeds, in one heart-pulse, to her absent swain,
Quick as that longing lover's sighs are cast
On other charms, forgetful of the past,—
So fleet was Zephyra.—What mortal view
Could catch the gleamy swiftmess as she flew?—

YE dames, of wondrous vision, who behold
The hamlet's annals, ere a month have roll'd,
Who if a beau and gentle virgin meet,
See vows and marriage, at one glance, complete,
Or, sadly conscious of some future guile,
Mark cruel secrets, in each laugh or smile!

Not even those eyes, of piercing ken, to see
Far distant fates, and things which ne'er shall be,
Tho' spectacles had arm'd them doubly bright,
Could trace the rapid radiance of her flight.

Unnumber'd worlds are past :—and now, afar,
With strange sweet splendour shines a brightening star,
Soft, as her liquid beams the dewy Moon
Exhales, yet lustrous as the orb of noon:
'Tis near :—and now, as if one spirit thrill'd
The circling air, with joy diffusive fill'd,
Thro' all her frame a tender softness glows;—
She feels the charm, but knows not whence it flows.
“Hail”—cried the Genius, as the soil she press'd
With buoyant foot.—“Sweet welcome to my guest!
Within these cliffs, that stretch like circling skies,
Thy Paradise of future empire lies.
Lo, where it opens!”—where'er she turn'd her sight,
Rock rose o'er rock, a glittering mass of light.
Far winding thro' the steep, one narrow cave
To the fenc'd world within sole ingress gave,
Not dim like earthly vaults.—A beamy wreath
The self-sunn'd archway hung on all beneath.

“Seest thou, who, watchful of the path, askance
Still on the entrance turns her lurid glance?

That form is Death."—As sickly tremors start,
The sound flew'd shivering thro' the Maiden's heart.
No spectre gaunt she saw, of bones entwin'd,
With scythe wide-brandish'd, as to sweep mankind.
But a plump dame, of pamper'd aspect sly,
With fiendlike scowling merriment of eye.
One hand an icy needle arm'd, whose blow
Numbs, at a touch, the quivering heart below,
Yet wrought so finely, that no eye can trace,
By gore or scar, the puncture's deadly place.
Loose from her other hand a pencil hung,
A feller weapon to the fair and young,
Light films, to brush from budding cheeks their bloom,
And print strange livid hues of ghastly gloom:—
Then, while in stony coldness dimly glare
Eyes, that once sparkled bliss, or frown'd despair,
She sits, and gazes, with joy-wrinkled brow,
And laughs, to think, what vows has Beauty now!
Pall-like her robe, and girt, in gorgeous strings,
Band fringing over band, with beamy rings,
No gaudy trinkets of a vain delight,
But toil-won trophies of her busy might;
Proud,—when each bosom, on some spousal day,
Even her's, who blushes oft and weeps, is gay,—
To cut the tie that binds two gentle fates,

And snatch the triumph of a Power she hates :
Thro' smiles and laughter sudden shrieks are spread,
And the trim bridal couch receives the dead.
So swells her glittering pomp. For bride, or lord,
Each thousandth conquest from those rites abhorr'd,
Another ring she numbers to her store ;
And his own emblem mocks her foe the more.
Couch'd at the dame's proud seat on either hand,
Grim Maladies reclin'd, a ghastly band,
Vain mimics of her power.—To speed the waste
Before her desolating track they haste ;
But short and faint the passing wounds they deal,
Till the cold bosom own her mightier steel.
Beside their Queen, who never langour knows,
They snatch'd from earthly toil a short repose,
Prompt, at a moment's flight, to wing their way
From orb to orb, and instant grasp their prey.
Each o'er the frame, with dews of venom'd gall
Breathes different taints,—but dire to Beauty all:
One with foul blotches clouds the limpid face,
And delves a little grave for every grace.
Another, where the rose's blush was seen,
Bids sickly yellow fade in sicklier green.
From the soft form, that awam upon the sight,
Full circling, yet like floating fairies light,

One the sweet roundness steals ;—nor lighter grown,
More heavy seems the flat cold length of bone.
Another, foe to frolic charms, that trance
With graceful airs the circle or the dance,
Bloats in huge amplitude the shoulder slim,
And gives the body's bulk to every limb.
Belles sneer, remembering :—gentler Beaux sedate
The present view, and leave the past to fate.

Scar'd at the throng, half wondering, half in dread,
The Virgin paus'd, and fear'd the path to tread.

“Shrink not”—her guide quick whisper'd—“calm behold

That scowl which sees thee not, securely bold?
Tho', in thy world, with bloom transcendent bright
Those earthly beauties glow in earthly light,
No mortal tints in rays ethereal shine,—
Thy charms all viewless to each eye but mine.”
She heard ; yet anxious trembled still, and cast
A shuddering look behind her, as she pass'd.

As thro' the cavern's glittering vault they wound,
Burst, startling, on the Maid a well-known sound.
Now, as from distant chambers, now more near

Wide-spreading laughter peal'd upon her ear,
Not the gay mirth of beaux and virgins blest,
Which, sure to follow, scarcely waits the jest,
But such as, rival Beauty's shame to swell,
In scornful titters flies from Belle to Belle.

A wondering look the Genius saw her raise,
And knew the silent question of her gaze.
'Nay, loveliest! think not, what thy ear alarms
Some earthly blemish scoffs of mortal charms.
Unmark'd thou tread'st;—and, tho' all eyes should see,
Can voice of ridicule have sounds for thee?
Yet once,—but not so fair—like thee on earth
They shone, whose anguish gave that laughter birth.
Within this arching rock—Even now we pass
The close barr'd portals. Lo their ponderous mass!—
In radiant amplitude bright halls are spread,
The purifying chambers of the dead,
To these, immortal, from the void abyss
They instant rise,—not instant pass to bliss.
Each rebel thought review'd, whatever fair,
Born like some native queen my sway to bear,
By vulgar passions won, has sunk from power,
And given to love or sloth an idle hour,
There waits, unmeet for Paradise, till time
And penance due to guilt efface the crime.

“Nor short nor slight the sufferance, when the weight
Of frequent sin provokes unpitied Fate :
But for brief mutiny, in frets begun,
And half forgotten ere the dance is done,
Wild wanderings more of fancy than the heart,
As light the treason, light the venging smart.
Now, in some gay saloon, while shines the ball,
And music’s prelude scarcely waits the call,
The happy fair beholds an eager throng
Sue her soft steps, to lead the choir along ;—
She hears the sprightly strain ;—her vestment swims,
Half girt, half floating graceful round her limbs.
Then, while she speeds, to join the frolic troop,
With sudden durance round her bursts a hoop ;
In vain she stops,—in vain, with angry haste,
Shrinks, writhes, and tears, to free her cumber’d waist ;
Wide, and more wide, the whalebone’s circling bound
At every effort spreads an ampler round.
Then swells the sudden laugh ;—and, hand in hand,
Wheels, link’d in rapid ring, the tittering band.

“Some guiltier belle a waited beau invites
Careful to tead the toilet’s anxious rites.
She views her mirror :—but how starts her eye,
Strange wrinkles on her faded brow to spy !

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And ah her bloomless cheeks!—What demon's rage
Has chill'd their blush, with pallid-tints of age!
Cosmetic succour won, a vermeil hue
All soft she spreads;—and, lo! the rouge is blue.
In vain she wipes, and washes, frets, and scrubs:—
The horrid azure deepens as she rubs.
She lifts the comb, where glossy ringlets stray:
Touch'd by that comb, each glossy lock is grey;
But other tresses, twin'd with graceful skill,
Play round her front;—and all is auburn still.
Alas! their lustre by contagion flown,
Those borrow'd tresses whiten like her own.
He comes.—Impatient of delay, in mood
Half gay, half angry, dares the youth intrude:—
She shrieks and flies.—Regardless of her speed,
He follows swift, and clasping claims his meed,
Turns her averted face, now stripp'd of charms;
And, starting, shuddering, drops her from his arms.

“ Thus, for short sins, short hours of penance flow;
But heavier guilt demands more lasting woe.
If, sick of bliss, some heart, in freakish gloom,
Long rebel, have abjur'd its queenly doom,
In one dull chamber must the fair remain;
A single youth her solitary swain.

There, while on earth, as many moons revolve,
As days were conscious of her rash resolve,
Save that one placid swain, no object find,
For all the witcheries of her eyes and mind.
She smiles.—Her soul's unutter'd jest is sought ;
As if a smile but spoke some mirthful thought.
She sighs, and looks as fondest Beauty grieves ;—
He asks her tale of sorrow, and believes ;
Thinks all the sadness for some lap-dog torn,
And proves by precept, that 'tis vain to mourn.
Sidelong a tender glance is sent,—and oft
Another steals, another yet more soft :—
He looks around, examines all with care,
And asks, if aught she seek his aid can bear.
She sings,—he listens,—she the strain prolongs ;—
He praises,—but he talks of *bards* and *songs*.
To gentler themes she guides,—the converse fills
With love's sweet tyranny, and lovers' ills,
Sad legends of long suffering hearts, that won
In death one look, content to be undone,
Youths, whose soft trust insidious rivals steal,
And virgins trembling at the flame they seek.
On all, her comment, sagely tender, glows,
And justifies the flame, and mourns the woes,
Expounds, from light regards how passion springs,

With woman's subtile lore of amorous things,
Lore, that, when Beauty lectures thro' her tears,
Melts with the warmth she paints each heart that hears.
Vain eloquence !—Its tenderest truths to scan,
All calm and cold, as man debates with man,
He grants, objects, now questions, now replies,
Nor seems to think his disputant has eyes;—
As if she used no logic but of speech,
Spoke to be heard, and reason'd but to teach.
So toils the day ;—and, many a day, must roll
The same sad circle o'er her sickening soul,
Each grace, or gay or soft, its toils renew,
As gay, as soft, and ah ! as powerless too.
No second swain gives livelier hopes to start
With sweet refreshment to the weary heart ;
But one calm aspect still her glance must find,
That kindly smiles, but never smiles more kind :
As when, on solitary heights, the blaze
Of summer sunshine on the glacier plays,
The radiant mass, as if the beam it felt,
Glow's, but impassive still denies to melt.

“Dire lot !—yet direr her's, whose single beau
At the first glance has soften'd in the glow !
Tho' by one only swain were Beauty view'd,

While still unconquer'd, one may be subdued ;
Gay airs, or softest languishings, that fail,
May find a warmer moment, and prevail ;
And even the iciest bosom, hard to ope,
Still leaves one joy,—the glorious joy of hope.
But with a slave, already tamed, to live,
Who sighs, and has no second heart to give ;
To hear, while tardy months like ages creep,
One moan, which lulls to yawn, but not to sleep ;
The fondness of one wearying gaze to brook,
Which looks, that it has nothing more to look,—
Dread doom !—When days, and weeks, and months are
past,
And days still come, more dreary than the last,
How would she wish, in mercy to her pain,
His heart unwon, to win it o'er again ;
How gladly meet, in joy her arms to wield,
The sternest breast, that never knew to yield !
Sighs, praise, soft chidings, every tender art,
But wake more fretful sadness in her heart,
Remind of conquest's charm, and, while they own
How sweet to triumph, shew that charm is flown.

“Shrinks thy quick pity !—There are crimes, that cost
Severer sorrows, ere their stain be lost.

Alas ! If sluggish fondness long obscure]
The bright ambition of a soul once pure,
Not by the simple griefs these vaults afford,
Is fair coquettish sanctity restor'd,—
But, with due pangs to renovate the saint,
Must deeper penance cleanse the deeper taint,

“ Then must the earth-loos'd spirit speed afar,
Where Love inglorious tends his glimmering star ;
For months, for years, as lasting guilt has spread,
His dismal Paradise condemn'd to tread,
Till, bath'd in ceaseless grief, from day to day,
It sigh the burthen of its sins away.

“ O blest, who, never on its confines hurl'd,
But hear'st the horrors of that dreary world !
How sad, whose lonely vision still must range
O'er smiling pairs, and pairs that never change,
Earth's wives and virgin lovers, doom'd to glow
Self-punish'd with the flame they felt below,
Content to find their simple mates above,
And yawn a dull eternity of love !

“ Soft is their sky ;—and eyes, of practis'd gleam,
Might sweetly languish, in so mild a beam :—

But, ignorant of charms, or only taught
That easy glance, which speaks the passing thought,
They never learn'd its little power to aid;
By looks that vary with the light and shade.
On the slow walk, where arm and arm entwines,
Or seat, where half the melting form reclines,
Unfading groves a tender shelter cast,
Shade of the present, record of the past:
Fond vows are broke by rapture's mingling kiss,
And even the very sighs seem sighs of bliss.
Who hears those whisper'd vows, and turns to mark
The frail memorial of the letter'd bark,
Would deem, some late-warm'd stripling carv'd the name,
And breath'd, or heard first own'd, a secret flame.
Alas! her ancient praise still prints the rind,
Who, even on earth, was impudently kind;
And the warm voice of rapture but endears
Some silly fondness, of a thousand years.

“Think, what my exile's griefs, thus doom'd to see
Names of fond triumph live on every tree,
But not her own,—to breathe the very air
Still whispering praises of less radiant fair;
Nor, in that atmosphere of vows, to trace
One rapture conscious of her smile or grace!

What anguish, when, too eloquent, apart
To *her* some simperer pours her happy heart,
Tells how her swain, ere half a wish arise,
Foresees the joy, and shares it from her eyes!
What worse than anguish, when, by grove or stream,
That swain ungallant dares a ruder theme,
Sings other charms, recounts each jestless word
Of wit, that scarcely knows to be absurd;—
Nor sues with fond petition, but to tell
If charms, so matchless, can be lov'd too well?
O! could she vex them! Vain that hope of ire.—
One ne'er is jealous;—one will ne'er admire:
And the sole joy, her powerless vengeance greets,
Is but to scorn and hate whate'er she meets.
Retir'd, she feeds her venom's rankling store,
And loaths, and longs, and envying loaths the more.
Then, 'mid her gloomy passion's sullen blaze,
New forms of rapture float upon her gaze,
Meek pairs, that smile, caressing and caress'd;—
And all is pleasure save her maddening breast."

"Cease, cease, in mercy save me!"—cried the Fair;
"Such cruel doom shall virgin errors share!
To hear is half to feel."—"Nay, shrink not *thou*!
Absolv'd, let past forgiveness clear thy brow!

Leave those to tremble, who their hearts pollute
With vulgar fondness, at some trifler's suit!
Once thou has sinn'd :—one pardon sin may crave.
Thy vision'd glories from new guilt will save.—
Yet, warn'd; remember!—and, if love allure,
Think of its stain, its penance, and be pure!

Her step oft pausing, as with wild controul
The imag'd horrors fix'd her listening soul,
Far thro' the deep recess the Fair had pac'd,
Scarce conscious of the winding path she trac'd.
One narrow sweep remain'd, when soon would lie
All Paradise beneath her glowing eye.
While yet the sudden-jutting rock conceal'd
That world of rapture, at a step reveal'd,
How started Zephyra, as near she drew,
A mass of shade dim-towering on her view!
Broad was the giant form;—but who could mark
The floating shape, immeasurably dark!
One dusky veil, in ample folds unbound,
Wrapt the whole frame, and loosely swept the ground,
Reveal'd not what it wrapt, yet gave to know
Some living thing, that faintly stirr'd below.
Self-dark, it gleam'd a misty horror wide;—
The very blaze, that flash'd on every side,

Bright as the sunny rock from which it sprung,
Around, half quench'd, like fading twilight hung.

Near a dull fount, scarce creeping thro' the cave,
It stood,—the Genius of the dismal wave.
No rill seem'd laughing o'er the rock to dance,
With mirth-inviting voice, and sparkling glance;
No water trickled,—all one bubbly swell
Of foam slow heav'd, that rose and burst, and fell.
Some, in a jetty goblet, like the fount
Still foam'd, and sunk, in other froth to mount.
This, as if proffering, in his shadowy grasp,
The living Darkness clasp'd, or seem'd to clasp;
For the thick veil, that widely mantled o'er,
But show'd the cup, nor mark'd the hand that bore.

Curious, yet trembling, half approach'd the Fair.
“Hold,” cried her guide, “Oblivion’s cup forbear!
Who tastes forgets.—From half dried tears distill’d,
Frailest of frailest things, that bowl is fill’d,
Sad drops, by grateful heirs, long watchful, shed,
Who count his acres, while they mourn the dead;
Or parting lovers, who, for solace, go,
One to his belle, the other to her beau;
Or dames, who, still with mild remembrance vex’d,

Weep one lov'd husband, ere they wed the next.—
Then memory warm'd them.—Now they lull, refin'd
To pure forgetfulness, the dreamy mind.

“When the last sighs of earthly breath dismiss
The transient charmer, to her home of bliss,
That no vain thought of human empire reft
May mix a sadness for the slaves she left;
The new immortal, in that bowl serene—
Ere Paradise receive another queen,—
With gentle draught, each care terrestrial steeps;
Her charms, and passions, all of earth she keeps.
But *thou*, still destin'd, mid thine earthly throng,
Those charms, those powers, those passions to prolong,
Bear with thee back, to scenes thy glance has sway'd,
Whate'er remembrance can thy triumphs aid.
Still, 'mid fond eyes, review thy labours done,
That arts, which vanquish'd, may secure them won;—
Still know the long assail'd, long stubborn swain,
With varied charms to win him to thy reign!”

Hark! on her ear what tender sounds arise,
Gay as kind titters, soft as yielding sighs!
Now wider opes the rock;—now glides she through;—
And all is Paradise, that meets her view.

THE PARADISE OF COQUETTES.

PART VII.

THE BOWERS OF PARADISE.

ANALYSIS.

Address to Woman. Her soul better fitted than that of Man, for conceiving the Paradise that is pictured to her. The species of light which floats over the scene. The fragrance. The air. The forms of the fair Immortals. Their vestments. Their celestial worshippers. The general appearance of the scene itself. Its lighter beauties. Its sublimer objects, that, in their very sublimity, still bear relation to the Beauty, for which alone they were formed. Its fleeting changes of natural aspect—and of the edifices that diversify it as they rise and fall. The simpler bowers. Seeming adaption of them for a single lover, while they permit and favour, the widest influence of Beauty. Brighter vision, which allows charms in Paradise to be seen at every distance. The vocal whisperings of the foliage of the ethereal bowers contrasted with the indistinct murmur of earthly leaves. Peculiar reflection from the waters. The charms of the scene itself almost lost in the more powerful charm of the living throngs that cover it.

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THE
BOWERS OF PARADISE.

HARD sons of rugged Earth, who, coldly taught,
Weigh every word, and question every thought,
Who, dull to catch the painter's glowing plan,
And finish what his rapid line began,
Might trace an imaged heaven before you spread,
Nor see one tint, but those his pencil shed !
To you I sing not.—While soft glance or sigh
Can bless my lay, no bard for scowlers I.

But thou—exulting Nature's happiest birth,
Whom many a frolic Pleasure led to Earth,
When laugh'd the air afar,—and now around
Near, and yet nearer, swell'd the choral sound,—

Till, as thy step the freshening verdure press'd,
Joy burst his slumber, and the world was blest !
O Woman, ever gentle ! to thy ear
Sweet be the votive song, thou deign'st to hear !

So kindred all to bliss thy soul, thy sight,
With eyes that look, and thoughts that breathe delight,
Still to thy spirit, half divine, is given
Some readier presage of its future heaven,
Some harmony of joy, whose faithful tone
Warm vibrates to the raptures soon its own.—
Tho' my light powerless touch, with colours faint,
But sketch the pleasures, which it cannot paint,
Thy genius, kindling with the quick design,
Can spread each hue, and fill the flowing line ;
Accordant to each vision'd scene, shall start
Dim images, that slept within thy heart ;
Till, as thy fancy lends its brightening aid,
Glow the full Paradise, it half pourtray'd.

Yes ! to thy vivid soul its truths belong ;
Thine, Beauty, thine, the poet and the song.
All bright to thee the bliss, whose shadowy view
In vain would Man's ungifted eye pursue :

To his dull glance that world of joy might seem
The short faint glitter of some idler's dream.

Yet if, when charms which bless'd his life are o'er,
The grateful lover would their fate explore,—
Their radiant heaven reveal'd, who, as they smil'd,
Made Paradise to him this earthly wild,—
Then, while his sluggish fancy toils, too dark
Celestial pleasure's finer tints to mark,
To aid the vision, let his memory stray
O'er happiest moments of each happiest day,
In one wide rapture blend whate'er could please,
And slowly sum what Woman instant sees !
Long-treasur'd smiles shall rise ;—and looks of love
Warm, with faint image of some joy above.

Where, Beauty, in her pomp of sweetness drest,
First beam'd, in sudden transport, on the breast,
Or, lovelier, where her eye kind warmth reveal'd,
And said, or almost seem'd to say, I yield,—
Tho' many a month have linger'd, ere the sod
Which own'd her graceful step again is trod,
Who has not felt a gentle charm serene
Live in each colour of the glowing scene ?
O'er bower and dell a tender gladness plays,—

Joy but to look, and luxury to gaze.

—So sweet, so mildly thrilling, on the sight
Shines the pure softness of that heavenly light.

When the swift sun has chas'd a summer shower,
Or evening's earliest dewdrops kiss the flower,
His course, half musing, if the wanderer take,
Down the green lane, or by the tangled brake,
What thousand sweets the mingling fragrance swell,
From humid leaf, bright cup, and drooping bell ;
Unknown each odour's part,—the gentle strife
One freshness all of aromatic life!

Not the coy turf-hid violet only greets,
Bashful and mild, with undistinguish'd sweets ;—
Lost, in the full delight, what prouder flows
From clustering woodbine, and the flaunting rose.
Tho' throb with quicker life his active breast,
Slow roves the loiterer, by the charm possess'd ;
And still, at every step, the changeful bloom
New incense breathes, and every breath perfume.
Such, in these bowers, a joy without a name,
Which all inhale, yet think not whence it came,
Immortal fragrance dwells ;—so, hovering o'er,
Still charms, still changes, but to charm the more.

When Beauty carols sweet some mournful lay,
And the last cadence faintly floats away,
Till not a murmur breathe, and all be still
As the warm lip that woke the fervent thrill,
Who has not felt,—of gifted soul to hear
More than light notes that die within the ear,—
A softening pleasure pause, as if around
The air still trembled with some melting sound !
Thus ever, but with softer joy intense,
Unheard, yet almost trembling on the sense,
Lives that pure calm divine :—tho' still the air,
The floating soul of music all is there.

Such are the joys, that mingled sweetness shower,
An atmosphere of bliss, from bower to bower ;—
Diffusive charms, that temper, while combin'd,
Gay plans and triumphs of the busy mind,
And, ever present, with delight unsought,
Fill all the little intervals of thought.
Quick as her step in Paradise, they play'd
In transport, round the half-unconscious maid,—
Unconscious, for her soul still softer drew
The living forms that crowded on her view,
Belles,—and if *Paradise* the lay disclose,—
Sweet listeners ! need I add, those Belles had Beaux ?

From matter pure, yet warm with living bloom,
Thin essence of a shade, without its gloom,
Bright shone the female charms.—With quick compare,
The mortal charmer knew her own less fair;
As quick her pride, that brighter power to trace
In the free spirit's all-refining grace:
Her future self presageful she beheld,
With haughty men, pleas'd to be excell'd.
On vulgar beauty if such power was thrown,
What lavish lustre would adorn her own,—
Her own, still loveliest, that from heavenly birth
Would rise transcendent, as it rul'd on earth!

The robes, which those soft forms ethereal bound,
Ethereal tissues, glitter'd bright around,
Of changeful tint and shape;—a wondering view
Scarce own'd the splendour, ere the splendour flew.
No eye the shifting vesture's flight could trace;
One gleam'd,—another glitter'd in its place,—
Now gay, now simple, now of pomp profuse,
Now folded half-succinct, now circling loose,
As if light Beauty's very mantle caught
Each quick caprice, that flutter'd in her thought.

If bright the Belles, to Zephyra's sage sight
The Beaux celestial seem'd a throng as bright.
Yet who, tho' skill'd in raptures, to divine
From love-warm'd eyes what brighter beams will shine,
Of those bright eyes the radiance could foretel,
When looks adoring shone from Beau to Belle!
Dear, even on earth, the suppliant glance to see,
When Man, the despot, is what Man should be,
Submits to Woman's smile his weak command,
Nor thinks of sceptres, when she waves her hand;—
Yet O! faint image of the joys, that rise
In every languish of celestial eyes.
Even Zephyra, the tender warmth who knew
Unmeant for her, still gladden'd in the view,
Still gaz'd, and, while she gaz'd, her humbler lot,
Earth, Paradise, love, envy, all forgot;—
As if the glance, tho' fix'd on other fair,
With more of rapture than one soul could bear,
Like some charm'd light, whose every ray must bless,
O'erflow'd to all around, with sweet excess.

Fix'd by those living smiles, scarce stole between
A careless glance, unlingering, on the scene;
Yet well that scene might gaze of homage call,
Undeck'd by smiles, with beauties native all.

Yes! ye were there—O hills, O mazy vales,
Woods, waters, all which Nature's wanderer hails,
Whate'er in Earth's wide glory gives to thrill
The pausing eye,—but O how lovelier still!
Such,—but how fairer!—as the vision given
To poet's slumber, when his sleep is heaven,
That oft, 'mid fancy's wilder shapes, appears
True as some well-known scene of others years,
Some shadowy softness, of diviner light,
Than earthly tints e'er flash'd upon the sight,
Which yet remembrance owns, and hails its gleam
The half-lost image of a long-past dream!

Could the dull eye discern what glows refin'd
The full conception of the master's mind,
When, proud to pour on canvas all his thought,
Some beauteous world his daring skill has wrought,
And, while observant throngs, the labour o'er,
Exulting, praising, wondering, half adore,
Still scans, with secret sigh, the feeble line,
Too cold, to image half the warm design,—
Nay, not that vivid loveliness could yield
Fair semblance of the lovelier world reveal'd.

Chief was the scene in gentler charms array'd,—
Lawns, where light groves but gleam'd a doubtful shade,
Soft sloping banks, whose closer woods beneath
Now o'er the streamlet hung their darkening wreath,
Now, loose retiring, oped that waveless glow,
Which scarce the whispering murmur mark'd to flow :—
Lights such as Beauty loves, that might supply
Harmonious lustre to her tender eye.

Yet was not all, of gay or tender grace :—
Sublimar pomp there found its awful place ;—
Dark mountain summits, on whose heights, that tower'd
In stern, still gloom, yet darker forests lower'd,
Wide, as some demon-hand's resistless shock
Had lifted, with its woods, a realm of rock ;—
Save where, in foamy light, a dazzling form,
The giant cataract, itself a storm,
Bade with hoarse howl the feebl' thunders hail,
And seem'd to fling whole ocean on the vale.

Even there, what Horror might sublime have view'd
Was fram'd for feelings of a gentler mood.
Calm as if shelter'd, at the mountain's feet,
The vale had sunk, in many a soft retreat,—
The forest shade, the cataract's dread throne,

The wild waste grandeur, form'd for these alone ;—
Where, like Night's tender beams, that loveliest glide
Thro' opening clouds, when all is dim beside,
A new and softer grace, from solemn Awe
Stern ministrress of charms, might Beauty draw;
When, 'mid the rocky glooms and torrent's roar,
Who gaz'd on smiles would feel and love them more.

Not constant shines the scene.—The fair expanse
Flits oft, with sudden change, and mocks the glance :
Where tower'd the hill, a bloomy lawn is spread ;
And vanish'd rivers yield to groves their bed.
With change more frequent richer splendours start,
Domes, columns, all the wealth of seeming art :
For, not as Earth's dull empire blooms or frowns,
Here constant fields; and there more constant towns,—
Mixed is the charm; and in the varying ray,
The grandeur softens, and the soft seems gay.
Light as the crowds it circles, floats along
The spreading palace o'er the swelling throng ;
Arch gleams on arch, where mead or thicket smil'd,
And spires, and pillars, shoot along the wild ;
As if, from many a realm of proudest name,
What gives each splendid city half its fame,
Tower, theatre, bright temple, gorgeous hall,

Swept by one magic hand, there mingled all.
Swift-fading pomp!—A glance beholds it rise;—
Another glance oft seeks it, and it flies.

But who, of fleetest vision quick to rove,
Could count the bowers, that gleam in every grove,—
Bowers, to whose shade the willing branches press,
And scarce a tree denies some kind recess.
No ample roof those verdant arches bear;
They close and canopy a single pair,—
Where Beauty, as she lists one fondest tone,
Shut from all worship, save that one alone,
Might *seem*, to simple glance.—Tho' clustering meet,
Where bends her swain, the foliage at her feet,
Loose, where she higher sits, and half withdrawn
From bower to bower, then opening on the lawn,
The widening branches, as if all were free,
Give the dear pleasure, to be seen and see,—
While, mark'd and lost by glimpses, livelier plays
Her eye's mild lustre, thro' the twinkling sprays.

On farthest crowds that radiance sparkles bright:
Not there, as in our dull and vapoury light,
The charms, which happy gazers circle fond,
Are cold and beamless to all eyes beyond.

O gladdeners of this sublunary sphere !
If, what our glowing hearts confess you near,
Ye shone to distant vision,—proud, on earth,
Were empire, paradise even mortal birth.
But ah ! tho' Wisdom quit his lore, to seek
The softer art, that wins to smiles the cheek,
Tho' courtly Grandeur haste to kneel, less vain
Of knightly silk, than of a softer chain,
Still leaves unconquer'd that victorious grace
Two powers of stern dominion, Time and Space.
Time, gentler tyrant, spares thro' many an hour ;
But, every moment, strikes the rival Power,
Leaves not a smile's full triumph, and that throne
Bounds to one little spot,—which earth might own.

A few short furlongs spread,—and who shall tell
From her grave grandmother the laughing belle,—
Or, where barouche with rival chariots strives,
The groom gay-lolling from the Peer who drives ?
There, brighter-glowing Paradise to each
Wafts the full form, wherever beam can reach ;
Her changeful place, tho' Beauty far should stray,
Mark'd by slight softenings of the vivid ray,—
So slight, as only woo new airs, to arm
For varying distances the varying charm.

When Summer's cloudless sun forbids to rove
The mead, and sends the wanderer to the grove,
Sweet, even on earth, if mildest zephyrs shake
The sighing leaves, that gentle voice they make ;
Yet lists it not the heart,—an idle sound,
That only says, What coolness breathes around ;
With happier murmurs float the bowers above,
Thrill'd into words, as if they whisper'd love.
When o'er the grove a breeze of ether springs,—
Fann'd, to sweet flutter of harmonious things,
The bending quivering foliage vocal all,—
From every spray what soul-like breathings fall,
Sounds, of sure charm, enamour'd, that restore
Past joys to Beauty's thought, and whisper more !
Tho' pause a moment's homage on her ear,
That very pause has words divine to hear :
Each leaf seems trembling with a tender vow,
And little flatteries breathe from bough to bough.

The streams, that thro' the laughing vallies glide,
Or linger in the lake with slumbering tide,
To softest forms as pure a mirror bear
And many an image glows reflected there.
But not like earthly rills, which pictur'd send
The dullest weeds, that o'er their margin bend ;

The heavenly waters, as in scorn to hold
One shape that lives not warm of rapture's mould,
Nor domes reflect, nor flower-wreath'd rock, nor tree;
Smiles, glances, graces, all they give to see.
Yet beams no scanty radiance on the sight;
For—like that mystic glass, of lavish light,
Which from one form a copious image spreads,—
Soft multiplies each wave the smiles it sheds.
The fair, reclining on the slope, where stand
In circling group a gaily duteous band,
Sees wider crowds, inverted, still prolong
Her sway, and almost wonders at the throng.
Where'er she turns, admiring glances glow;—
And all above is bliss, and all below.

Such were those scenes to vision, could they lie
In self-deck'd charms, before some lonely eye,—
A world of wild magnificence, where Art,
Sportful as Nature, claims no prouder part,
While seems the quick-sprung colonnade to tower
Spontaneous from the vale, like rock or bower,—
Glades, where a fancy-brooding heart might dwell,
And feed on loveliness in every dell;—
So lovely were that world, of living grace,
More dear, denied not, half the charm to trace.

But o'er the lawns, and in the gleamy shade
Of groves, and radiant openings of the glade,
Such throngs are spread profuse,—the bright expanse
Glow's all one melting smile, or mirthful glance;—
The scene itself scarce mark'd, but as it wears
Some tender semblance of the charms it bears,
And every joy, its native beauties give,
Felt, as if flowing from those charms that live.

THE PARADISE OF COQUETTES.

PART VIII.

THE JOYS AND GRACES OF PARADISE.

ANALYSIS.

The joys, which Zephyra observes in Paradise, however vivid and varied, still bear an affinity to the occupations and pleasures of earth; the very charms and passions of mortal Woman being themselves only a faint inspiration of those which she is to display and feel, in the brighter world that awaits her. Universal homage the delight of Paradise, as it is the ambition of Earth. There, by the aid of one potent illusion, each feels, as exclusively her own, the worship that is paid to all. The worship enjoyed, not with the dullness of certain possession, but with that slight mixture of gentle doubt, which renders so delightful on earth the first moments of conquest. The pleasure heightened by slight occasional alarms, that are dissipated almost as soon as they arise. Continual succession of adorers, and new aspects under which they appear. Comprehensiveness of memory, which gives, in a single

glance, the remembrance of all who have adored. Rapid changes of scenery, magnificent or simple, and of the very splendour or dimness of the light that flows around, in instant accordance with the species of grace or beauty wished to be displayed. Difficulty for a mortal to trace the delights of the scene, while she endeavours to comprehend the whole multitude before her. Zephyra therefore fixes on a single fair, and watches her through the display of her graces and triumphs. Music. Difference of the dances of Paradise and Earth. Painting. Coquetries of science. Disputation in heavenly physics. Mode of adjudging the victory. Zephyra, with increasing impatience and anger at her own invisibility, in the midst of adoration of which she cannot partake, flies at last from Paradise, not to return to it, till she can herself be seen. Number of feelings comprised in a few heavenly moments, and shortness of the earthly time that has elapsed during her absence. Disappearance of the Cestus, carried upward by its own levity. She retires to rest. Dreams, and sinks at last to more profound repose.

THE
JOYS AND GRACES OF PARADISE.

Yes, Woman, yes! tho' all our eyes behold,
In that sweet radiance of terrestrial mould,
Even while we bless and hang upon thy will,
Fairest of mortal forms, is *mortal* still,—
Tho' smiles shall vanish from the lip, and fly
Love's thousand voices from the glistening eye,
Not mortal is the living lustre given,
That shines thro' every hue, with charms of heaven.
Even now, instinctive prescience to thy mien
Lends many a grace of triumphs yet unseen,
O'er all thy soul a softer gladness showers
And warms with passions of ethereal bowers.

Whate'er the wish, that animates thy glance,
Melts in the song, or kindles in the dance,
With smiles, which bid who witness hope to share,
And frowns, whose very wrath forbids despair,
That wish, and all its charms, of gentlest birth,
Are light which Paradise has deign'd to Earth :
Reflected from thy smile we feel it shine;
Mark not the source, but know the beam *divine*.
The bard, who hallows with thy praise his flame,—
Nymph, angel, goddess, each celestial name,—
Warm'd by that light, which only lovers see,
But speaks prophetic, what thou soon shalt be.

And bless'd the fate, which gives thy heart below
With future passions tender joy to glow !
What if, till heaven's full transport flow'd possess,
No kindred wish had thrill'd thy mortal breast,
For love's gay studies different lore been dealt,—
Stones, salts, or metals, all thou car'dst to melt,—
Thy sullen pastime squares to cube, or class
The cylinder's and cone's proportion'd mass,—
Then Earth, thy Earth, so sweet for man to tread,
Were the dull prison of the breathing dead.

What raptures, as she scann'd the heavenly maze,
Had beam'd on Zephyra's permitted gaze !

Yet, in each rapture, had the virgin caught
Some native joy, familiar to her thought,—
Semblance of Earth, as Beauty's living light
Of the dim shade, that marks her track with night.
More bright the blissful glance ;—yet still, above,
Beaux gaz'd on Belles, and gaz'd with looks of love.

“Think not”—the Genius said, while round her pour'd
Adoring crowds fond hymns to crowds ador'd,—
“Think not, the belle enjoys no beam of praise,
Save that best worship destin'd for her gaze!
If every smiler shar'd some tender look,
Poor were the triumph, which all hearts partook,—
The pride, the charm, my bounteous art combines,
At once extends the blessing, and confines,
Spreads sweet illusion, by whose power secure
Flows the free joy,—yet flows from envy pure.

“At bright Hilaria's seat, do lovers sigh?
Each look to Lydia seems a wish to fly.
When Lydia's ear a tender suppliant woos,
Each look seems truant, which Hilaria views.
On thousand nymphs tho' thousand glances fall,
Each, harmless plunderer, reaps the joy of all,
Thinks on herself those thousand glances thrown,
Reigns amid circling queens, yet reigns alone.

Who kneels afar, some gentle vow to pay,
With low-bent front, which gives no glance to stray,
As if his very flight but mark'd, how sweet
Eyes, which he sadly shunn'd, afraid to meet,
Still seems, that sad impatience to avow,
In act to turn his still-averted brow.

“So when, on canvas, from the gorgeous frame,
The melting virgin, or the ardent dame,
That bloom'd, in charms which many a rhyme records,
On mouldering kings, and long-forgotten lords,
In pictur'd youth, immortal still, to wage
The gentle warfare of another age,
Beams on the sons of sons the smile, whose glow
Warm'd the brisk grandsire, when he danc'd, a beau;
Tho' fifty gazers share that smile confest,
On each apart its softness seems to rest,
Rests, as if each were all,—with tender grace,
Still fix'd, and faithful to his changing place.
Even he, whom scarce the portal bids advance,
Seems hail'd at entrance, by that waiting glance,
The glance which follows thro' the long saloon,
And, even at parting, says he parts too soon.

“Can looks of potent wile in gold be set?
Is woman's very image a coquette?—

If dull dead oils, and duller varnish, gleam
O'er half a crowd that kind diffusive beam,
What wonder, here, that smiles celestial give
Yet wider transport, when the smilers *live!*"

"Nay," cried the fair, "I question not the sway.—
Oft have these very eyes, of dullest ray,
These mortal orbs, without one heavenly wile,
Bless'd three proud lovers, with a single smile.—
Yet say, is all the joy, thy world can pour,
To see a mob of faithful slaves adore?
Queens may they be:—yet tell, for pity's sake,
How hearts, *so very happy*, keep awake!"

"O lovelier still in all I see and hear,
Even by that doubt, that question, still more dear!
Too well,"—the Genius answer'd—"might thy charms
Feel in that frightful thought unfeign'd alarms.
No hope to light, no fears to fan a flame!
All slaves, and slaves without one struggle tame!
So fondly dismal if these bowers could be,
Not Paradise itself were Earth for thee,
But trust the conscious Power, who, wise to scan
The secret throbs, which woman veils from man,
Knows, in her bliss to blend each tempering part,
And pours the well-mix'd rapture on the heart.

Still in that rapture,—while each voice is praise,
Love in each look,—an anxious softness plays,
Sweet doubtfulness of joy,—no throb of dread,
But tremors gentle as the charm they shed.

“Even Earth that charm partakes.—When fears are
past,

And the long-frozen bosom melts at last,
When love’s first eloquence, with warmth devout,
Reveals those tender truths, ’twere sin to doubt,
Thou sure hast felt, soft-linging in the pride,
That does not fear, yet scarcely dares confide,
Thro’ all the bliss a momentary thrill
Of half-uncertain wishes tremble still.
Too sweet for frail mortality, on earth
Brief is the charm, half perishing at birth :—
Here lives it, lasting ;—each adoring hour
Like that first moment of victorious power.

“Yet, sometimes, even that joy to raise—for bliss
They feel with liveliest charm, who fear’d to miss,
And well may rapture pay short sorrow’s cost ;
A moment seems some gallant smiler lost.
’Tis terror ;—but, ere doubt have ris’n to pain,
The truant lover kneels and smiles again.

“So when serene the noontide radiance glows
On some calm bank, which rocks and woods inclose,
Where, long-embower’d in gloom, the sunny rill,
Glad sparkling in the beam, tho’ bright is chill,—
On that warm sod, uncross’d by wanderer’s path,
Some youthful blushing sweetness dares the bath.
Half bold, half trembling, her last venture thrown,
Safe from all view, yet shrinking from her own,
Even in the flood, as if one veil to save,
With hurrying haste she stoops beneath the wave,
Then seeks the slopy turf,—and bends, all bright,
Her dark locks glistening o’er her neck of light.
With what sweet glow, the renovating beam
Repay the shivering chillness of the stream!
Life owns, in every pulse, the freshening power ;—
And one short shudder warms thro’ many an hour.

“Such is that shivering fear, when lovers fly ;
Such that warm transport, when again they sigh.
'Tis quicken’d pleasure all.—With livelier dance,
The kindling spirit throbs to every glance ;—
Each voice has double love, and smiles unfold
More tenderness, than smiles were deem’d to hold.

“Nor only doubt’s short thrillings I employ,
To save the rapture from a sluggish joy :

With charm more sure to chase the dull delight,
I bid Variety her bliss unite,—
Still call around, tho' all adore who view,
New forms, whose worship makes even fondness new,
And still a thousand changeful aspects fling
On each fond sigher of the suppliant ring.
Ere sated pride the lover could disdain,
That alter'd lover seems another swain,
Salutes with different tone the gladden'd ear,
Dear as the past, as present yet more dear.—
Unchang'd in homage, still one theme prolong
The ever-shifting ever constant throng.

“Yet vain the widening triumph's changeful glow,
Vain all the thousand shapes of every beau,
If, feeble still, the earth-loos'd spirit cast
No wider vision o'er the radiant past,—
Dull, as that mortal memory's little gaze,
Which wanders o'er an evening's looks of praise.
Oft hast thou mourn'd its span, too narrow wrought
To hold earth's scanty lovers in a thought.
Ere half a week's past conquests slow it find,
Some tenth or twentieth ever lags behind:
Fast as they rise, as many fade unmiss'd;
And hundreds won scarce seem to swell the list.—
Here, brighter, ampler, the capacious power,

Still widening with the joys of every hour,
 Sweeps, with a moment's view, the foad expanse ;—
 And not one look of love eludes the glance.
 Think then, if earth's frail retrospects be sweet,
 In whose dim range scarce twenty lovers meet;
 Think, what the rapture, when a moment hears
 The sighs and whispers of a thousand years !

“Nay, mark'st thou not !” —She heard.—Could ear re-
 sign

The tender breathings of that voice divine ?—
 Yet even that voice but partial audience found,
 While looks of busy wonder rov'd around,—
 Rov'd, swiftly varying :—ere one question spoke
 Her wishful soul that wish another broke.

“Say, kindest Power !” she cried,—“while sparkles
 bright

On lips and laughing eyes the flowing light,
 O say ! what darkness, 'mid the glittering air,
 Flings short soft twilight on that single fair ?—
 And see ! now high in rapid splendour rais'd,
 Now sinking, as to mock the eye that gaz'd,
 What dazzling piles oft gleam and vanish !—Tell
 The potent witchery, monarch of the spell !”

“Queen of my witcheries, thou, who in thine eyes
Bear'st my best magic, cease that vain surprise !—
If dear, *on earth*, to short-liv'd woman dear
Change even of joy, shall all be constant *here*,—
No shifting lawns and domes such charm recal,
As freshen'd mortal bliss, ere bliss could pall,
When, rout and racket past, the summer's train,
Soft nymphs, and lordly rustics, trod the plain,
Till Pleasure's shorter sun new routs reveal'd,
And call'd the courtly peasants from the field !
What change dull earthly months were slow to bring,
Here flutters instant, on a moment's wing :
No loitering autumn needs the fair to kill ;—
She wills a town,—and towns obey her will.

“Ere, sudden, from wild blooms the palace start,
A swifter wish has glanc'd thro' Beauty's heart.
Not groves alone rejoice her ;—tho', when flowers
Live warm with laugh or whisper, sweet the bowers.
Oft would the fickle smiler, kindly gay,
When every heart has own'd her sprightly sway,
Lead, with new airs sublime, and mien elate,
Her majesty of charms thro' halls of state,
Reign in some heavenly gala, and prolong
Fond awe, half love half worship, from the throng.
Then bright saloons, and domes, and columns rise,

And mirrors spreading seem to seek her eyes ;
Wide glittering ceilings instant radiance cast,
Swift as her fancy, with its whim to last : —
Awhile she reigns delighted, — quits her throne, —
Feels a new wish, — and all the pomp is flown.

“ The shade, which, ’mid the splendour flowing free,
A veil o’er Beauty’s cheek, thou smil’dst to see,
Owns the same power : — for here what Beauty wills
Not man alone, each element fulfils.
In gentler grace to languish sought the fair ; —
And with mild lustre gleam’d the soften’d air.
Well know thy changeful charms, nor suits the bloom
Of every light their power, nor every gloom :
Some call the glowing beam, their pomp to aid ;
Some, modest, seek the beautifying shade.
What tho’, at morn, the toilet’s careful art,
True to the morning project of the heart
O’er softest eyes the tender ringlet throw,
That sheds at once, and veils, a gentle wö,
Or from the forehead lift a sprightly wreath,
And ope the cheek of smiles, which laughs beneath
That morning look must wait, or sad or bright,
Till other toilets suit another light.
Not such the heavenly lustre. — Tints of power
Here gleam and fade, a thousand in an hour.

With each caprice, the charmer sees arise
Gay lights, mild shadows, fickle as her eyes."

While the full scene one wide confusion mix'd
To Zephyra's keen search, that glanc'd unfix'd,
Divided looks in vain the virgin cast,
Lost in the hurrying crowd, that flitted past.

"What! think'st thou," said the voice divine, "thy
gaze

In one wide grasp can hold that living maze?—
More quick to scan its raptures, let thy view,
Thro' all the labyrinth some Fair pursue,
See every changeful thought one bliss prolong,—
That bliss, those charms, an image of the throng!

"Lo there, who, to thy merry childhood true,
In romp, and laugh, and frolic ever new,
Soon heard, a solemn confidant more dear,
Thy heart's first sighs, so sweet to tell and hear;
In the same winter with thy beauty's glow,
Burst on the world, tho' rival scarce a foe:—
Both friends, both fair!—Even half a winter past,
Still seem'd that wondrous constancy to last.
Spring glisten'd on her tomb.—Now, see her shine!
Know'st thou that grace, long second but to thine?"

On her thy glance be fix'd !"—"On Laura !" said,
With half a sigh of faltering grief, the Maid.

The sigh was fondly true.—O'er memory came,
In many a crowding thought, the childish game,
The busy eve, that deck'd them for the ball,
The plans, the hopes, the joys,—now mournful all :
Yet, if less grace immortal beauty wore,
That sigh had haply mourn'd the mortal more.

Fair was the form.—No smile so radiant there
Gleam'd the wide loveliness, where all were fair ;
And bright the gallant throng, that round her seat
Breath'd sweetest sounds, where every sound was sweet.
Loose o'er a harp her fingers stray'd :—her arm,
Like the soft melody's embodied charm,
Hung o'er the strings, light-floating, and around
One mingling music shed of sight and sound :
For, bent tho' every brow, and fix'd to hear,
As fix'd, as busy, seem'd the eye as ear.

"Now," said the Genius, "skill'd in looks of praise,
Now, mark the charm, when heavenly listeners gaze ?
Oft, when thy voice divine would give to air
The sweetest sounds Earth's heavy fog can bear,
How has it dull'd thee, 'mid the gathering throng,

To scan the fops and fools, that hail'd thy song,—
No brow of beaming mind,—the listless whole
Eyes without ears, or ears without a soul :—
And, when thou heard'st the constant praises swell,
Which say,—the song is o'er and all is well,—
Chill felt'st thou on thy heart those raptures strike :
Which every happy squaller wins alike,
Now, see a judging band ! now, learn to prize
Such praise as glistens in celestial eyes !”

The strain flow'd fitful, such as nymphs, who boast
A mien of many graces, love the most,
When the quick-shifting numbers, sad and gay,
Give each accordant look its turn of sway.
Careless at first her touch, as if she found,
Where'er her fingers stray'd, the ready sound ;
And a light smile, still carelessly serene,
Scarcely stirr'd the quiet of her face and mien.
Then, sudden bending o'er the wires,—her glance,
Her mien, all warm, as in poetic trance,—
She shook the stubborn chords, and seem'd to wring
A fierce wild sweetness from each struggling string.
Now low,—and lower yet,—and yet more low,—
Like echo sighing to some lover's wo,
Scarcely seem'd a sound the murmur,—all that took
The melting soul, a motion or a look.

She ceas'd ;—and, as she slowly gave to view
That glance, still softer from the notes she drew,
That humid orb, which gleam'd where'er 'twas cast,
A charm reflective of the pleasure past ;
And as that living mirror drank, the while,
The full fond radiance of each plausive smile,—
Sweet Zephyra ! how chill to smiles like those
The sober simpers of thy earthly beaux !

But see !—the harp is vanish'd like the strain.—
The worshippers and Goddess sole remain.
Sole !—No, around her seem'd the group to swell ;
And gay to many a beau laugh'd many a belle.
From flower-twin'd columns, stretch'd in light expanse
An arch of flowers o'er-canopied the dance ;—
Not as in joyless earthly balls, that pair
Down the long line one partner to the fair,
Till free she smile, releas'd ;—of mazes sped
Less weary far, than of the hand that led :
With swifter change, the onward-moving row
Brought, at each choral round, another beau ;
And, as the measure bade the rapid train
Pause, or advance, swain circling after swain,
Still breath'd the grateful sounds on Laura's heart,
How glad I come,—and O ! how griev'd I part !

Ceas'd now the dance.—Of all that train so bright,
What gleam'd on Zephyra's bewilder'd sight?—
For glittering columns, met one bower her view,
One swain, one nymph,—and Laura's charms she knew,
But not the charm, a heavenly pencil lends
To each soft motion of the hand it bends.

Yet, even on earth, when lovely limnings cease,
But half he views, who scans the finish'd piece.
More bright, than Beauty's brightest draught divide,
Her living form, who gave those tints to shine,—
The arm, now swift, now slow, as fancy wrought,
The half-bent neck, the pausing look of thought,
Light movements, that, in thousand graces thrown,
Even while they pictur'd charms, reveal'd her own,
When gentle youths behold her, as she prints
With fairy touch some petal's watery tints,
Or, dashing, sweeping, flings, with careless toil,
Hills, rivers, meads, a glittering world of oil,
O dull, who think, no prouder thoughts direct,
Than where the tree should bend, or rock project?
With studious skill, she bids each motion trace
Some ever-new diversity of grace;
And, with imperial smile which all obey,
Wields the light pencil, sceptre of her sway.

So shines the mortal belle,—so, spotless reigns,
Mid oils and ochres, and a thousand stains,
As if, in native loveliness secure,
No earthly soil could touch a form so pure.
But not in Paradise gross hues expand,
Nor heavy pallet loads the weary hand.
Soft o'er one palm a little rainbow stream'd;
Of whitest rays, as soft, a pencil beam'd,
Which Laura graceful held, and dipt with skill
In the quick colours, flashing at her will,—
Bent low, with busy arm, as if she knew
No presence, but the fancied form she drew,—
Yet sometimes deign'd a gentle look to raise
To eyes, that watch'd with more than critic praise.

'Twas Beauty's form, fair imag'd,—such, as caught
In short sweet vision, haunts the poet's thought:
Yet not enough the critic deem'd divine;—
He snatch'd the pencil, to reform the line,
Gave other features;—and, those features shown,
How smil'd the artist, as she knew her own!

She smil'd;—but Zephyra no smile partook.
“What! must I view,” she cried, “each rapturous look,
See crowds of flatterers, all their follies hear,—

And not one bosom own, that *I* am near !
Bear I the penance ?"—As she spoke, she press'd
In nicer fold the silk that bound her breast,
Then bade a glance, which Earth might worship, glow
Full on the youth :—but ah ! still blind the beau.

Wide in theatric pomp the bower had swell'd ;—
The beau scarce seen amid the crowd it held.
Still Laura graceful shone ;—tho' she, whose eye
Once lov'd her near, now mark'd her with a sigh.
Light charms had yielded to a calmer power ;
And Reason, sober Reason, rul'd the hour :
While every mien a studious air refi'd,
Attun'd to grave coqueties of the mind.
Thro' the full throng no spreading titter broke :
Belles spoke, Beaux heard, yet meekly heard and spoke.
Each look was wisdom ;—as sage nymphs debate
With sager youths, in drawing-rooms of state.

For as, on earth, love-gathering Beauty brings
Increase of power from lore of dullest things,
With smiles and systems, charms alike in all,
The morning lecture as the evening ball ;
There, wise in chemic wonders,—better known
The ring and belts of Saturn than her own,—

With student beaux a lovely student sits,
Confounds gay fops, and half convinces wits,
Proud her soft war of pedantries to wage,
And flirt at once with Science and the sage:—
So, even in Paradise, to thought serene
Oft calms the sprightly nymph her laughing mien,
Inquires, pronounces, doubts, with sapient air,
Smiles, and confutes,—philosopher, and fair!

Yet not as earth's fair seers, who, deeply read,
View nature, like their fan, before them spread,
In one wide glance o'er all its marvels stray,
From central caverns to the milky way,—
As quick to solve, with technic terms profound,
Tho' sometimes wrong in place, still sage in sound,—
More lively themes pursues the heavenly belle,
A sage, where Love a fellow sage might dwell:
Her sole geometry, what curve demand
The step, the nod, the graceful-waving hand,
Sole logic, where some smile has had its part,
And all her physics physics of the heart.

Such now the themes, which critic beaux engaged;
While belle with belle the rival question wag'd,
Wise but to charm the wise,—his praise their claim,
But the fond umpire's self their nobler aim.

Fir'd by that double meed of love's applause,
They sought of wondrous things each wondrous cause ;
Whence flows the sudden gloom, that dims, at sight
Of some new swain, whole circles of the bright,
Tho' not with warmer smile that lover woo,
Than the last gazers, when *her* smile was new ;—
Why a kind whisper, faintest sound to hear,
Yet vibrates longest on the listening ear ;—
Why hands, that scarcely own'd a ruder grasp,
Thrill, by soft fingers prest with softest clasp ;—
When lives and smiles the mirror's full expanse,
As passing bevy's cast a sidelong glance,
What strange attraction, in the image thrown,
To every gazer most endears her own ;—
What eloquence the powerful speech supplies,
When lips are mute, and eyes are fix'd on eyes ;—
Such mystic themes the gentle wranglers sped,
Doubtful, and dark.—But doubt and darkness fled ;
Nought left for wonder, when the strife was o'er,
But the sweet marvel of their charms and lore.

The strife had ceas'd ;—and sole remain'd to crown
The victress sage, the plaudit of renown.
No single shout a single fair confess'd,
Which, joy to one, were grief to all the rest ;—

With happier art, the name she felt excel
By every beau was breath'd to every belle.
Soft was it whisper'd :—but, so sweet the flame,
The gathering glory seem'd a loud acclaim.
Where were those eyes then lingering, that of mould
Invisible to all, could all behold ?
Swift, as on earth to mark a rival fair,
On Laura turn'd, they paus'd, scarce wandering there:
Youth after youth with whisper whisper seal'd ;
And still new smiles the well-heard praise reveal'd ;
And still new crowds came gratulant.—The throng
Vex'd Zephyra, impatient, glanc'd along,—
More vex'd, more angry, saw, tho' crowds withdrew,
The endless line still lengthen to her view,—
Then turn'd, once more the hated smile to trace ;—
A prouder joy seem'd kindling on the face ;—
And as she longer watch'd, on her, the while,
Half seem'd in mockery fix'd that haughty smile,
Fix'd, with that look, which beau-girt virgins throw
Modest and mild, on belles without a beau.—
'Twas doubt at first, scarce credulous ;—but grief,
Shame, wonder, wrath, soon made the doubt belief.

“What! shall she know me then,” she cried,—“exult,
Proud of her bliss, and smile but to insult !

And shall I then an idle gazer stand,
As if to number all her simpering band !
No ! let dull rivals sum each flirt's amount !—
Mine be the triumphs, which I deign to count !—
Yes ! By this cestus, whose ethereal fold
Shall bear me back, to eyes that can behold,
I too have charms ;—and, while on earth are given
Those charms who feel, be earth my mortal heaven !
Then, when these bowers again I hail, and free
As this pure radiance, beam on all I see,
These bowers shall know me, and who haughtiest shine
Shall fade, and sicken, at one smile of mine !”

Half sad half ireful, from the throng she turn'd ;—
Yet, tho' within contending passions burn'd,
Not, even in tumult of those mix'd alarms,
Forgetful of her gratitude and charms,
Mild to the Genius, as if loth she went,
A parting look of loveliest thanks she sent.
He smil'd, consenting,—where the cavern lay
Led her quick step, and cheer'd the winding way :—
Then, as she trod with earthly foot once more
The rock, which first the wondering stranger bore,
Half-shrinking from the flight,—his soft farewell,
More looks than sounds, in parting blessings fell.

"Pursue thy wish," he cried, "nor fear to roam !
Safe, as my care, that wish shall wing thee home.
Go,—and till Fate, that doom'd thy mortal scene,
Shall give to Paradise its loveliest queen,—
Let smiles of destin'd fondness round thee vie,
Which Fate may count, but Fate alone and I !
Go, spread with charms my empire !—At thy glance,
Let Joy and Conquest wake the yawning dance !
Or thro' dull Routs, like vision'd Rapture glide,—
Sighs in thy train, fond whispers at thy side !
Yet O ! when most thy triumphs spread my power,
And Earth's best transports fill the glowing hour,
Forget not him who proud that joy shall see.—
Think sometimes of thy heaven,—and oft of me !"

She heard, and smil'd with softest glance,—then sped
The potent wish,—and Worlds behind her fled.

Now, on that ottoman, where feebly shines
The glimmering flame, what gentle fair reclines ?—
'Tis she :—and heaven's sweet moments can unite
Of sublunary hours such full delight,
Not many an earthly minute's track is o'er,
Since that fair form the same soft cushion bore,
Unspent, the tapers gleam ;—and in the hall,

Gay Susan, summon'd by the tinkling call,
While sad to Frank she flies the half-won trick,
Slow rising, wonders at a call so quick.

But *thou*, best charm restor'd !—what thoughts possess'd

With memory's wild confusion all thy breast !—
In vain, as busy with her tongue as hand,
New flattering themes the sage unrober plann'd :
Nor feather's praise, nor mantle's graceful flow,
Nor eyes that deck'd them, seem'd the Fair to know.
The filmy zone, that still her bosom bound,
Cautious, with gentlest touch, herself unwound,
Then bade the treasure place, with safest things,
In the rich coffer of her gems and rings.
Quick were the hands that minister'd ;—but nought,
Tho' stretch'd with instant speed, those fingers caught.
Much marvell'd Susan :—with expectant haste
Her downward eye the mazy carpet trac'd.—
The fair, with sadder glance, had mark'd it rise,
And knew the lightness, that must reach the skies.

Close-curtain'd to repose, when o'er her frame,
Long restless tost, a feverish slumber came,
Still in wild dreams her spirit rovd unfix'd,
Where worlds with worlds in rude disorder mix'd.

Now thro' mid air the rapid cestus bore ;
Now Earth seem'd Paradise,—then Earth once more,—
Herself a thousand shapes,—while forms as wild
Hung round, and clamour'd, as she laugh'd or smil'd.

Then, soft, and softer, slumber fell,—and stole
A calmer lovelier vision on her soul,
So true to life, if earth beheld it gleam
Her waking heart had realis'd the dream.
Bright throngs were met,—and near her, tam'd in pride,
A penitent and slave, the Colonel sigh'd.
'Twas joy,—'till lo ! with wrinkled cheek of gloom,
Morocco's dusky envoy cross'd the room.
What transport then, to win, whom seventy wives
Own'd lord of all their fondness,—and their lives !—
Dull the wish'd voice, that once, with truant tone,
Seem'd, as if Love's whole faithless sex had flown :
Laughs, whispers, smiles, how vain !—No charm appear'd,
But that green turban, and that hoary beard.

Such Zephyra's mild vision, till at last
Sleep o'er her frame a dreamless quiet cast,
Gave the warm eye in softer dew to swim,
Sooth'd the quick pulse, that throb'd thro' every limb,
And lenient nurs'd for renovated sway,
The charms and triumphs of the coming day.

THE PARADISE OF COQUETTES.

PART IX. THE PRAISE OF COQUETRY.

ANALYSIS.

Address to the future inhabitants of the Paradis , not to disdain the triumphs of mortal coquetry, in their contemplation of the joys that await them. Transition to the praise of the Power, whose empire they are to spread on earth. His bounty in repairing the frugality of Nature, in her distribution of the sexes,—influence in civilising the world,—and in still continuing to soothe the angry passions of the civilised. The desire of pleasing considered in its important relations to labour and commercial intercourse. Picture of the weakness and misery, which would be produced in a State, by the extinction of this one passion. Hence the public glory of coquetry, as the source of the wealth and power of nations,—all the functions of whose government, depending on that financial prosperity which flows from her influence, may be considered as indirectly exercised by Beauty herself. Conclusion. Parting prayer to be remembered.

THE
PRAISE OF COQUETRY.

CLOS'D is the strain.—To Beauty's smile supreme
Dear be the verse, as to her bard the theme !—
What bowers, when galas on her vision fade,
Receive her charms immortal to their shade,
Light wishes, sweet to form as to fulfil,
And pleasures changeful as her varying will,
My verse has sung,—O ye whom Kings obey,
O charm, O glory, of that earth ye sway !
Tho' my fond numbers, like their poet true,
To those lov'd eyes have oped a brighter view,
Scorn not, impatient for your distant sphere,
The humble world ye grace and gladden here.

R

What tho' ye pass, like zephyrs, fleet as soft,
That breathe a freshening joy, then glide aloft,
Even in life's little gleam, 'tis sweet to find,
How many hearts one laughing hour can bind,
Were man's stern bosom stone, ye well might haste,
Silent and heedless, thro' the dreary waste,
But, since thro' glowing crowds your journey lies,
And *some* bright youths have *souls*, and *all* have *eyes*,
Still smile, still vanquish!—As ye move along,
Let every gaze be worship from the throng!
Since Paradise, to bound your path, is given,
'Tis meet, that glory mark the track to heaven.

So when the nymph, whom eager viols call,
Like Fame's shrill voice, to lead the sprightly ball,
With heart elate, but air of modest grace,
Half guides, half follows, to her honour'd place,
Tho' her quick soul, in joy's inspiring trance,
Already views the glories of the dance,
Not lost to present triumphs, still she arms
Each moment's smile, with all a moment's charms.
Even when she quits the couch, and, rising slow,
Bends to the gallant whisper of her beau,
Views the gay tumult, calm, and as she glides,
The fluttering troop of hastening pairs divides,

Not heedless are her glances taught to stray ;—
In march to reign, she conquers by the way :
Light steps, and choral triumphs, half-foreseen,
Play round her heart, and brighten all her mien.

And ye, to happier realms of tender mirth
Who dance in gladness thro' this festive Earth !
With such sweet influence, let the joys foreknown.
But warm each look, and soften every tone !
Even now, in kindling visions of delight,
From endless pleasures catch a beam more bright,
The smiles of Paradise to mortals deign,
And grateful spread his sway, by whom ye reign !

O blest Coquetry ! while thy sportful Power
Leads the fond triumphs of the hall or bower,
While one brief smile shall half a rout deceive,
And village youths, oft cheated, still believe,
Be frequent altars thine,—and, as they blaze,
Due hymns let Beauty's choral priesthood raise !
Oft as another hecatomb shall fall,
A hundred loiterers, victims of the ball,
Then, duteous, let the dame or virgin bring,
Her votive offering for the conquer'd ring,
With fragrant essences thy shrine bedew,

And love's warm tribute on the altar strew,
With hundred billets load the pile, and keep
A flaming madrigal, to fire the heap ! •

Joy of thy busy world, who leav'st no wo,
No languor, but sweet languors meant for show !
Without thee, what were man,—condemn'd to prize
The scanty sunshine of a pair of eyes !
Her number'd sexes Nature sparing dealt,
One youth to worship, and one maid to melt ;—
Vain avarice of charms !—for O ! how soon
Thy bounty turn'd to wealth the niggard boon ;
Nor ask'd a new creation's bright display,—
By simple means magnificent of away !
Enough earth's slumbering loveliness ;—thy art
But gave one passion to the waken'd heart.
Then all was life.—As if some bounteous Power
Had call'd a thousand nymphs from every bower,
While each o'er throngs diffus'd her soft command,
Each lavish charmer was herself a band :—
Thro' love-lull'd bosoms, thrill'd a gayer tone ;
And Nature laugh'd with beauties not her own.

Where youths and virgins met, and lingering stood,
Or sadly sat, or sadlier paced the wood,

With voice, strange dialogue of sighs that kept,
And eyes that, languid, seem'd as if they slept,—
There, when again the hamlet's joyous day
Pour'd its bright concourse to the festal May,
What gladdening change!—With rapture-spreading wile;
Glance laugh'd to glance, and smile was caught by smile;
With jest and revelry soft whispers strove,—
And vows and frolics echoed thro' the grove.

Soother of frowns! O friend of every grace,
Of every charm, which Virtue loves to trace!
The courteous look, the winning air divine,
How much of all that softens life, is thine!
Thee savage eyes with beam less scowling own,
And rugged voices find a blander tone
First sweet progressive softness!—Who shall scan
What widening blessings from that change began?
Perhaps each glory of the moral sphere,
Peace, Order, Truth, then oped their bright career.
The social law, that calm protection flings,
And shelters peasants, as it shelters kings,—
The cultur'd wild, brood-spreading to the sun,
The wealth, which free and fearless hands have won;
Arts' sprung from wealth, that deck the fostering power,
As, borne on stems and foliage, smiles the flower,—

These gentle blessings if some kindred ray
Diffus'd,—what influence gentle as thy away?

The forest's human howlers, who for food
Rush on some feeble monster of the wood,
In whose dread homes, which never fondness decks,
No kind ambition breathes from sex to sex,
But love, that thinks not mutual bliss to share,
Is force or plunder, like the prey they tear,—
Hords, dark and joyless, whom no art has cheer'd,
'Mid carnage born, to fiercer carnage rear'd,
Touch'd by thy flame, with softening ardour glow;
A second sunshine melts the gloom below;
New beauties seen awake a new desire;
The hope, the charm, of pleasing spread the fire:
Rude graces call each brightening power to aid;
And wild coquetries civilise the shade.

Even now, when Earth is gay, and every Art
Has beam'd a mellowing radiance on the heart,
Thy pleasures still life's little wraths attune;—
And Virtue wins, and smiles to win, the boon.
When witching lips no bland enchantments speak,
And more than love's faint blushes fire the cheek,
Thy moral power the gather'd front disarms,

And spreads a sweet serenity of charms ;
Kind sunny beamings play, where shades had hung,
And laughs, and whispers, float around the tongue.

How oft has Beauty—for no bloom, nor wit,
Can save the loveliest from her pout or fit—
From her vex'd brow the Cyprian softness driven,
For sterner graces of the Queen of Heaven!
Her nymphs, presageful, view :—each trembling ear
Waits what nor gods, nor men, delight to hear.
It bursts,—Her lord, in distant chamber gay,
Knows the dread sound, and trembles for the day,
Resumes the leaf of news, and scans once more
The twice-read paragraph, well scann'd before.
Then, while applauding hands glad Furies beat,
As the last lovely softness quits its seat,
What art the gloomy wrinkle shall beguile,
And back triumphant bring the banish'd smile ?
Quote holy precepts from the moral page !
Upbraided wrath but glows with double rage.
Point what the mirror shews, severely true !
What are the looks, which only husbands view ?
Thine is the suasive whisper,—*shine* to balm
The inward sting, the outward tempest calm.
In that worst tumult, when, all mingling high,

Even servile tongues assert the sharp reply,
When screams the cag'd macaw, and Snap more bold
Yelps, and the frighten'd echoes scream and scold,
Let but a herald voice below proclaim
Of last night's ball some gallant flutterer's name,
All wrath is hush'd.—Again the mirror fair
Smiles with the image which it loves to bear:—
The baleful light, that shot its flames askance,
But leaves more lucid spirit in her glance.
Now to the fair saloon with peaceful tread
She glides, and gathers every softness fled;
And, as the beau her courteous accents greet,
What mien so gentle, and what tones so sweet!
Her lord, when dinner joins the lonely two,
Sees gay with smiles the brow he fear'd to view,
Thinks some new lustre o'er her form is cast,
And half forgets, that honeymoons are past.—
So, at thy charm divine, all tempests cease,
Home shines with joy, and evenings set in peace.

Not the light Graces spread thy power alone;
Rough Labour bears his tribute to thy throne,
Wields all his thousand hands, and smiles to see
Whole Nature vanquish'd, but a gift to thee:—
From elemental wars he gathers bright

The gentle armour of a kinder fight,
The spoil profuse around thy champions pours,
And gives the glittering toilet all its stores,
No wandering curls a guardian pin demand,
Or the loose mantle ask a clasping band ;
He bids the far-cleft rocks their gems display.—
They know his mighty footstep, and obey:
Now o'er his path the floods exulting swell ;
From Ocean's bed he tears the pearly shell.
In vain the airy surge, to mock his quest,
Lifts the strong pinion from its mountain nest ;—
Down sinks the fluttering soarer of the storm,
And the light plumage decks a fairer form.
Obsequious flames around their victor glow :
He gives the future bracelet's gold to flow,
Bids melting colours mingle, and supplies
The robe and riband with their changeful dyes.
With Nature's varied splendour shines the Fair ;
And every element has treasures there.

Prompt at thy voice, all-daring Commerce flings
To tempest-brooding gales his fearless wings,
Asks every shore, what vesture's soft deceit
Makes grace more winning, and even smiles more sweet,
Spreads the new pomp to Beauty's eager arms,

The conscious mirror brightening with her charms ;
From climes, where Zephyr shuns the blazing seas,
And Toil scarce freshens in the sultry breeze,
Wafts fairy fans of sandal's od'rous bloom,
Or downy tissues of Cachmiria's loom ;—
Now, half benumb'd, 'mid fogs that hide the day,
And warring ice-rocks, wandering for their prey,
On shores were shivering Summer treads with haste,
While Winter howling re-demands his waste,
Even there he finds, tho' savage terrors lower
Some charm for Beauty's universal power,
When the bright Fair shall o'er her bosom throw
The sable's lustrous shade, or ermine's snow.

Where the moor'd vessel waits the gather'd bale,
Or far at ocean struggles with the gale,
Tho' mortal orbs, ungifted, nought can mark
But the coarse seaman, sturdy as his bark,
By purer eyes a gentler crew are seen,
Light winged flutterers, busy for their Queen.
With solemn air, like merchants o'er their ink,
Or statesmen, when they think, or seem to think,
Some, gravely anxious, watch the growing freight,
Peep thro' each fold, and scan its brilliant fate,—
What charms to clasp shall be the tissue's doom,

What laughing brow shall nod beneath the plume.
It sounds,—the tumult of the parting cry.—
What hurrying pinions to the cable fly,
And, when the deep-fix'd anchor scarce is stirr'd,
Strain all their little aid, and pant unheard !
Now while,—as if it sought no wind to urge,
Speeds o'er the deep the victor of the surge,
On every shroud some busy hoverer glides,
Or, idly wanton, on the streamer rides,
Or, couch'd within the sail, with folded wing,
Points the worn shaft, or twangs the slacken'd string.
One, o'er the compass bending prone, surveys
The faithful steel, with meditative gaze,
Culls a light arrow, for the needle's part,
And on his bowstring pois'd supports the dart.
The shifting bow the shifting shaft pursues ;—
He views, and, angry, wonders as he views.

Thus still, with ceaseless charm, what first inspir'd
Industrious wishes, prompts the zeal it fir'd.
Tho' rude the desert clime, to hands that toil
Some bounty Nature deigns, on every soil ;
Not life alone,—she deigns, that life to grace,
Some decorative gifts to every race :
The varied gifts to varied labours call ;

And commerce spreads the local wealth to all.
Hence nations flourish.—To thy sway they owe
What binds the social weal, and daunts the foe.
Some brighter charm, the gazer's soul to seize,
All strive to win—for all aspire to please.
From little vanities what treasures swell!—
Unthinking patriots every fop and belle ;—
And not a heart is won, or conquest plann'd,
But gleams a brighter splendour o'er the land.

Hence, when contending states, thro' mix'd alarms,
Vie glorious, in the strife of arts and arms,
To curb the proudest in the generous course,
Asks not a mighty victor's whelming force ;
Enough, if there one passion's tender pride
Lose the sure charm, it sheds on all beside.

Let starch grown swains the circle's praise forego,
Nor deem it triumph, to be rank'd a beau ;
No female heart with gay ambition swell,
Proud among belles to shine the brightest belle ;—
Then, where a glittering store the counter press'd,
And virgins titter'd to some fopling's jest,
No more shall lovely bands, successive seen,
Match shade with shade, and talk and laugh between,

But o'er unopening silks sad gloom be spread,—
And all be dull, as Beauty's self were dead. *
Each Art, that toil'd to swell the radiant store,
Shall ply its busy ministry no more.
In the far village, where, by winter's blaze,
The matron turn'd her wheel of other days,
Or, at her cottage door,—when evening breath'd
Sweet fragrance, from the shrubs her hand had wreath'd,
And Summer, smiling round in freshness, cast
A half-oblivious joy, like rapture past,—
Gaz'd, as she drew her thread, with tender pride,
On the mild form, that caroll'd by her side,—
No more that wheel its murmur shall prolong,
Which humm'd, and circled, to the maiden's song.—
The shuttle, that with never-weary clack
Its journeys counted, shall forget its track :
The seaman's languid eye, each listless day,
Shall mark his mouldering vessel's swift decay :
Sad with their country's griefs, the courtly tribe
Shall mourn a treasury which cannot bribe ;
Place, pension, power, shall fly on paper wings,—
And nations tremble, to the thrones of kings.

Yes! all is Beauty's rule.—The gentle flame,
That lights with joy the lover's kindling frame,

Suns into wealth and power a realm's expanse,
And blesses empires, as it charms the dance.
What tho' denied her timid hand, to wield
Of combat, or of law, the sacred shield,
From arts, that flourish in her genial reign,
Those glories flow, which arms and laws sustain.
See, as she laughs, rich salaries unfold,
And statesmen think, and warriors march, for gold;
Then trace the public rill, that bears around
The generous meed, to names of haughtiest sound;
She pours the primal wealth :—and charms, which pay.
The haughty ruler, well may boast the sway.
The bearded sage, whate'er his function's style,
Is but the proxy of her sovereign smile.
That smile, thro' golden transmutations drawn,
Frowns on the bench, or growls in holy lawn,
Harangues in councils, or with courtly grace
Convinces pension'd patriots into place.
The plummy-crested chief, in battle's hour,
Marks, by his feather, whence his sword has power ;
And the mild glance, to which her lovers yield,
Makes navies fly, and armies quit the field.

The theme is clos'd :—yet, dreading to retire,
My hand, still lingering, wanders o'er the lyre :—
Well may the conscious bard, sweet listeners, fear
To cease the happy strain, that binds you near.
O ! by those warm attentive smiles, that hung
In fond approval, as the tale was sung ;
By dearer softness of those grateful eyes,
In sadness gazing, as the murmur dies !
To memory when afar this strain shall seem
Like doubtful music of some broken dream,
When even my lyre, half-mouldering in decay,
Frail, like the feeble hand that pour'd the lay,
No more to Beauty's praise its tribute flings,—
O ! be not *he* forgot, who swept its strings !

THE END.

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